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SCRUTINY

A Quarterly Review

Edited by

L. C. KNIGHTS H. A. MASON
F. R. LEAVIS W. H. MELLERS

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HENRY SIDGWICK'S CAMBRIDGE

SLIGHT and fragmentary as are the reminiscences of Mary Paley Marshall, the University Press must be congratulated on having published them,[1] with their historically valuable photographs, as a more generally available reminder of a very remarkable woman and context than the interesting obituary notice that Lord Keynes contributed to the *Economic Journal* in 1944. As Professor Trevelyan writes in his introduction, 'her intimate personal experiences of the very first beginnings of women's education in connection with Cambridge University' is 'historically the most valuable part of the book'. It is a reminder of the most revolutionary period in Cambridge's history, already so remote as to be almost mythical and apparently almost forgotten. Mary Paley, who died three years ago at the age of ninety-four (working daily, till within two years of her death, in the Marshall Library she established in memory of her husband), was one of the first batch of women students at Cambridge, when 'female higher education' was being planted here by Henry Sidgwick and his friends. For he is the key name of this period, as can be seen equally from her memories and from those of many others. To read Mrs. Woolf and other feminists one would conclude that university education for girls was actually forced into being by women in the face of the brutal resistance of hostile mankind. In point of fact the initiative was either taken by men or encouraged by them, and in Cambridge at least the experiment depended for its success entirely on the work of a great many distinguished Cambridge men who were impelled by conscience and benevolence alone to give their time and energies and lend their names to the cause (I don't mean what later became known as The Cause).

The indefensible kind of opposition to higher education for women came from the man in the street, to whom the lead was given by women like Charlotte Yonge and Queen Victoria—reinforced by another kind of woman whose motives are suggested in this anecdote of Mrs. Fawcett's (I quote her reminiscences from memory): the wife of some important Cambridge figure expressed thankfulness to her that 'that place' [Newnham] was not there in her husband's younger days. 'Why not?' 'Because if it had been I am sure he would have married one of them instead of me'. It must have been because of such Cambridge ladies that Sidgwick, according to a (probably heightened) story told to Mrs. Marshall,

[1] *What I Remember*, by Mary Paley Marshall (Cambridge University Press, 7/6).

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'in those early days of the movement walked up and down wringing his hands and saying: "If it were not for their unfortunate appearance" '—meaning that his young ladies tended to be handsome and well-dressed. A respectable opposition came from those dons who saw in Sidgwick's scheme the first steps towards turning a man's university into a co-educational one, an objection that shows to-day as highly prophetic.[2] Even Marshall the great economist, whose early sympathies were entirely with the movement and who worked for it and married into it, dug his heels in at a given point. 'When the great trial of strength came in 1896 over the proposal to grant women's degrees he abandoned the friends of a lifetime and took, whatever his wife might think and feel, the other side'.[3] Similarly Miss Emily Davies found that even academics hostile in theory were prepared to do all they could to help her up to a certain point. When in 1880 she wished to get the University to appoint members to help govern Girton College she wrote 'I was agreeably surprised at finding people most friendly, and I feel encouraged as to our prospects altogether. I went to see the Vice-Chancellor (Dr. Perowne), who was supposed to be unfavourable, and found him very gracious. The Master of Trinity, who I had been told was our great enemy, expressed his willingness to make the proposal for us!' Perowne was the leader of the Conservative party in Cambridge, and 'fundamentally opposed to the admission of women in any form'. But he was quite willing to help women to a university education separately; in this he was representative of the opposition.

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[2]The fear that Cambridge would be gradually turned into a mixed university if any concessions were made was grounded in the declared ambitions of Miss Davies and her supporters. The one thing all the promoters of women's higher education could agree upon was that they would not have a separate women's university. Royal Holloway College was actually endowed and built on a scale which should enable it to set up as a women's university but the Governors convened a conference (1897) and rejected the idea. 'No one' said James Bryce summing up for them, 'is in favour of having a separate University for Women'. At the outset of her campaign, before anything practical had been effected, Miss Davies wrote (1868) 'The College is intended to be a dependency, a living branch of Cambridge. It will aim at no higher position than, say, that of Trinity College'. 'Such a degree of humility will not be considered excessive' was the *Times* comment. The rejection in '87 of the proposal to grant women degrees was due to 'the fears of those who, as Dr. MacAlister said, felt that they were being asked to adopt a tiger cub on the grounds "that it is such a little one, and can't do any harm, and won't be in the way, and will please the children very much" ' [*Emily Davies and Girton College*].

[3]Keynes, *Economic Journal*, June, 1944. He continues: 'But Mary Marshall had been brought up to know, and also to respect and accept what men of "strict principles" were like'.

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In 1868 Henry Sidgwick was writing[4] to his sister:

> 'Do you know I am violently engaged in a scheme for improving female education? A Board is constituted of Oxford and Cambridge men (no end of swells, including the people who have refused Bpcs., etc.)'.

Next year he reports that his proposals for establishing Lectures for Women that could be examined on met with 'considerable support from members of the University', and in the same year writing to F. W. Myers 'about female prospects' he said 'The fact is there is no real conservatism anywhere among educated men. Only *vis inertiae*'.[5] In a widely-read letter he contributed to *The Spectator* at the beginning of 1869 he remarks: 'Whatever may be said in favour of a different school education for the two sexes, the present exclusion of women from the higher studies of the University is perfectly indefensible in principle and must sooner or later give way'. [6] His wife and brother make it clear that there was a male genealogy: 'Sidgwick had had his thoughts turned in a general way to the subject of the education of women by the writings of John Stuart Mill and doubtless also by F. D. Maurice, whose interest in it is well known, and who was, as we have seen, at this time Professor of Moral Philosophy at Cambridge'. The outcome of all this was that his proposal that lectures should be organized at Cambridge for women and examined on was sponsored by Henry Fawcett, Professor of Political Economy, and his wife,[7] a committee was formed, Sidgwick took on the secretarial duties and drew up a scheme of lectures, and scholarships were provided for students to take advantage of the opportunity to improve themselves. In 1871 Sidgwick decided that what the movement needed was a Cambridge home, so he took a house for students on his own responsibility, financial and otherwise; he was then thirty-three and a bachelor, with no means but what he earned. He persuaded Miss Clough to take charge of his household, and enlisted such coming men as Alfred Marshall to teach with him there. Thus did Sidgwick initiate Newnham College. [For two years later, after

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[4]*Henry Sidgwick*: *A Memoir*, by A.S. and E.M.S. (1906).

[5]When in 1868 Dr. Henry Jackson thought it likely that Cambridge could be induced to hold exams. for women, even Sidgwick did not expect immediate success, but 'a memorial, taken round by Mr. James Stuart (later Professor of Mathematics), was signed by 74 members of the Senate, including some of the most rigid conservatives'.

[6]This must have been generally felt, for only four years later 'twenty-two out of the thirty-four Professors then existing opened their courses to women. More followed later, and inter-collegiate lectures also gradually became available'.

[7]Thus making it possible for their daughter Philippa in due course to become Senior Wrangler (13% ahead of the male runner-up).

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additional houses had been taken, it was decided to build; 'Newnham Hall' was opened in '75 for thirty students, and when Miss Clough died in '92 and Mrs. Sidgwick (Arthur Balfour's sister) was called on to succeed her as Principal of Newnham College he cheerfully gave up his house and went to live there for the rest of his life, he being Professor of Moral Philosophy].

One of those who took this newly-founded Cambridge Higher Local Examination for women was Mary Paley. Educated like so many Victorian women by mere governesses and fathers, she nevertheless was successful enough to be offered one of the first Cambridge scholarships. Hence the piquant spectacle of the grandson of Paley's *Evidences*, an Evangelical cleric, bringing his daughter up to Cambridge in '71 to place her in the charge of the sister of the infidel poet Clough (her orthodoxy was in fact gradually undermined, by, as she writes, 'Mill's Inductive Logic and *Ecce Homo* and Herbert Spencer and the general tone of thought'). There were four other students that year.

Parallel with all this was the development of Girton College. Miss Emily Davies refused to compromise the principle of identical studies and examinations for women and men by acquiescing in the Cambridge Committee's scheme and against advice she established at Hitchin in '69 a rival band of students. But as there were no other instructors available, she had to ask for help from the university. Hitchin was inconveniently placed, 'so that each teacher would have to throw away three hours spent in travelling' each time. Yet Sidgwick, with many more of the Cambridge Committee, was 'interested in this scheme too and was from the beginning and for many years on its staff of lecturers'. It says a great deal for the principles and good-nature of the men that though they had reported against Hitchin as a site, and urged Cambridge instead, they gave their services ungrudgingly, and Miss Davies wrote that all the teachers she had in view on opening were 'of the first rank'.[8]

When in a few years a fund enabled building at Girton to be started, a strong objection still held: Sarah Burstall, the future famous Head of the Manchester High School, came up to Girton in '78[9] to take the Maths. Tripos and reported:

> 'All our work was private coaching with such Cambridge men as could be induced to come out three times a week, nearly two dull miles of a long walk along the Huntingdon Road, to take on the teaching of young women, often ill-prepared and unlikely to reflect honour on their teachers. Naturally, first-rate men only came if they were friends of the College and believers in the movement. I was fortunate enough to be taught by three such men'. [*Retrospect and Prospect*].

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[8] *Emily Davies and Girton College*, by Barbara Stephen (1927).
[9] On a scholarship given by a Cambridge man who for many years devoted the income from his Fellowship to this purpose.

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More than one Senior Wrangler had taken the trouble to go out to Hitchin in the early days to 'pour an amazing illumination on elementary mathematics'.

One of the great advantages enjoyed by the original women students was that only first-rate men taught them; the in-breeding and consequently much more limited choice of teachers that the development of the women's colleges at Cambridge has brought about is obviously not ideal. Mary Paley and her few fellow-students who decided to take the Moral Science Tripos (which then included economics) enjoyed almost individual tuition from such outstanding teachers and thinkers as Sidgwick and Venn and Alfred Marshall, men who were either Professors already or who later held chairs, who were moreover intellectual pioneers engaged in opening up new branches of study. Mrs. Marshall says that they had 'practically the same lectures as the men' but given to them separately, so the devoted lecturers 'had to give their lectures twice over' (not to speak of a possible third time at Hitchin). The women had to take their Tripos papers separately from the men, and the papers were brought from the Senate House post-haste by voluntary 'runners', among whom were such eminent (bearded) academics as the logician Venn, Sidgwick, Marshall and Sedley Taylor. The early women students at Cambridge, in spite of their generally irregular education and lack of the advantages inherent in emancipation, seem to have had access to many of the best minds of a great age here—Cambridge stirred to educational and intellectual reform by the large group of gifted men known as the Cambridge Liberals. The other advantage the women pioneers enjoyed was that they had not been through the mill of the examination grind and the other shaping influences of the good girls' schools nor been tested by the 'sieve' of the Entrance Scholarship Examination.[10]

Mrs. Marshall's reminiscences give us striking pictures, which can be compared with and supplemented by those quoted in *Emily Davies and Girton College*, of the women students before they became as a regular thing a tamer variety, 'mostly Head Girls of good girls' schools' who superseded them, as Sarah Burstall noted. [Now, in the third stage, about 30% come from the state elementary schools, up the educational ladder, *i.e.*, through the examination sieves]. But the original students were expected to come from the Hall and the Rectory and the homes of professional men and manufacturers, according to Emily Davies. These were not docile, down-trodden or meek-spirited, though they were certainly ladies. In 1872 poor Sidgwick was already complaining: 'This term has been rather

[10]In reviewing Mary Agnes Hamilton's *Newnham* in *Scrutiny* (June, 1936) our reviewer, a Senior Student of Girton, said that 'it is not so easy to share Mrs. Hamilton's enthusiasm for present conditions' and remarked, as a schoolmistress herself, that 'a doubt remains as to how far the sieve for the selection of the best-fitted entrants is effective'.

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a trying one. There is such a strong impulse towards liberty among the young women attracted by the movement that they will not submit to maternal government'. In fact, they were not schoolgirls but 'women of character', even though some of them were but sixteen years old—'really very outstanding people' said Miss Dove who entered the Hitchin 'College' in '71; 'all people of some force of character, or they would not have been there' wrote Barbara Stephen. Samples of their conversation and deportment noted by Mrs. Marshall are startling. Henry Sidgwick rebuked a young lady who cut his lecture—'You should apologize', to which she replied: 'Is it a case for two cups of coffee and pistols?' Invited *en masse* to Marshall's rooms in college on Sunday evenings they complained that he had not provided a 'back glass' for their hair, and the poor anchorite (after enquiring what a back glass was) had to buy one. Miss Paley, at a dance at a college Lodge, invited Marshall to dance the Lancers and in spite of his protests of ignorance pushed him through the figures. Soon after she took her final examinations they became engaged—'Miss Clough pretended to be shocked' but gave them a sitting-room where they collaborated on a text-book which 'contained the germs of much that appeared later in the *Principles of Economics*'. They married and she looked after him and his writing for the rest of his life. Naturally these young women looked down on undergraduates as 'boys', as she writes, and felt that it was for the society of dons that they had come. The women's colleges from the very beginning had evidently two functions. If on the one hand they were to provide Heads for the new girls' schools and women's colleges that began to spring up everywhere, they had an equally important function in providing distinguished academics with suitable wives. The seal was set on this latter activity when Miss Agnata Ramsay, who in '87 was placed alone in the first division of the first class of the Classical Tripos, married the Master of Trinity. Though it was not till '81 that women were permitted to take the examination on exactly the same footing as men and had their names published in class lists, yet they had never suffered for want of countenance and support, and their occasional outstanding successes were received with the greatest generosity. In 1880 the first woman Wrangler appeared; 'the exact places of women candidates were not published, but it was privately known that she was equal to the eighth Wrangler. When the Mathematical Lists were read in the Senate House [to an audience of undergraduates] loud cheers for "Scott of Girton" made it impossible to hear the name of the eighth Wrangler'.—[*Hertha Ayrton*: *A Memoir* by Evelyn Sharp].

The advantage that the earlier women students enjoyed then was the difference between being coached for examinations and being educated by liberal minds of a certain stamp. When we enquire what these educators were like we find that they had in common certain characteristics, whatever subjects engaged their particular attention. They were open-minded men of very considerable personal culture who subscribed to an idea of a liberal

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education and to the highest standard of disinterestedness. To read the life and letters of Sidgwick is to make the acquaintance of a different world from our own. When Sidgwick died there was a rare outpouring of feeling from his many famous old pupils, who included Dr. Keynes, Sorley, Arthur Balfour and Professor Maitland. The great Maitland said 'I believe he was a supremely great teacher', spoke of his 'rare intellectual virtue' and after describing his lectures as something altogether extraordinary ended: 'We turned to other studies or pursuits, but the memories of Sidgwick's lectures lived on . . . the method remained, the spirit remained, as an ideal'. One of the undistinguished pupils wrote, significantly: 'The rigid attention necessary to follow him in lecture some found almost too great a strain'. He was incapable of popularizing and lectured and taught always at the highest level. He had started as a Fellow of Trinity by teaching Classics for eight years, but becoming completely sceptical of the value of Classics in education he became interested in subjects which came under the Moral Science Tripos. The year 1868 gives a good cross-section of his character. He was at that time (aet. 29) leading the group of Trinity reformers whose 'thirteen proposals', drafted by himself, included a scheme for awarding scholarships and fellowships for Natural Science, appointment of officials to teach and direct studies in different departments, and the abolition of the religious tests of conformity to the Church of England taken by Fellows on their election, proposals which, as he wrote to his brother, 'open an almost unlimited vista of reform as soon as possible'. Most were carried but not the proposal to abolish religious tests, which would have enabled Dissenters and Roman Catholics and agnostics to hold fellowships. Whereupon Sidgwick resigned his Assistant Tutorship and Fellowship in protest, risking cutting short altogether his university career for an abstract principle, since he remained a member of the Church. Trinity, however, unwilling to lose him as Trinity Hall had lost Leslie Stephen on almost the same issue, offered him a post as lecturer in Moral Sciences (which carried no dogmatic obligations), so he merely had a much diminished income. Winstanley in his severely legalistic history of Victorian Cambridge is moved by Sidgwick's resignation to the only spark of feeling in the volume: 'It was the purely voluntary act of a high-minded and very scrupulous man who thought no sacrifice too great on behalf of honesty' he writes. 'It is impossible to exaggerate the moral splendour of his action'. Other Trinity Fellows followed his example and resigned, so that the whole matter came up again for consideration and next year the tests were abolished at Trinity. The following year the religious tests in the universities were abolished by Act of Parliament (1871). Sidgwick's Cambridge was therefore a place where it was possible to be a moral hero and find plenty of backers. A Sidgwick was not isolated, he represented rather the most visible point of growth. Behind him was an intellectual ancestry in which John Stuart Mill and Clerk Maxwell counted for much; he was the friend of George Eliot and her novels owe much to this world.

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A similar history surrounds his educational activities. We have seen how the schemes he founded for 'female education' bore immediate fruit. But they were only one section of his plans. In 1868 also, besides working for the women's cause he was giving a great deal of attention to what could be done for the men. Thoroughly disillusioned about Classics he was trying, in common with others at Cambridge, to form a fresh centre for a liberal education. 'We have a new *University Gazette* . . . it is going to contain all the newest educational notions' he had written. 'I hope the thing will lead to a good deal of healthy discussion'. Sidgwick's contributions were on improvement of Little-Go, reform of the Classical Tripos, the study of English, and revision of the College lecture system, 'including free competition among lecturers. He argued that under a system of free competition bad lecturing would "be driven entirely out of the field" '. [Imagine the outrage of an attempt to discuss comparable issues in a University organ to-day!]. This is another testimony both to the immense stir of life in the Cambridge of that age and to the liberal atmosphere. In the same year appeared a co-operative enterprise, *Essays on a Liberal Education*, to which Sidgwick contributed an essay of startling modernity called 'The Theory of a Classical Education'. Of this he wrote in a letter to Oscar Browning: 'Curiously, while you half charge me with writing beyond my serious belief, I have not written up to it. If we had only first-rate teachers and text-books of the subjects worth knowing, I should be inclined to pitch the Classics overboard. But one great advantage of literature as an instrument of education is that it supplements a teacher's defects so much. Temple is moving for English, as you probably know'.

Sidgwick was also moving for English, in association with other modern literatures. [Besides his classical training, which he had supplemented with Hebrew and Arabic, he had read and kept up with French, German and Italian literature[11] and seems to have studied history intensively. He became a specialist on moral and political philosophy and delivered papers on sociology, economics and so forth. One might compare the intellectual career of W. H. Rivers]. It was his dissatisfaction with the results of a classical training that made him opposed to Emily Davies's fanatical insistence on women's taking the Little-Go. He arranged for special terms for his 'house of study' for women; instead of the Previous with its compulsory Latin *and* Greek they could take a local exam. 'with its liberal scheme of options' which he thought not only better adapted to the intellectual condition of girls at the time but likely to give a lead to university and school reforms for the men. He declined to join Miss Davies's demand for admission of women to degrees (including the notoriously disgraceful Pass Degree) on the same terms as men because it would have meant their taking Little-Go. As he wrote to her, he was 'not opposed to identity of

[11]He used to give lectures on English and French literature to the Newnham students.

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conditions for the two sexes'[12] but he was 'determined if possible to prevent the University from applying to the education of girls the pressure in the direction of classics that would inevitably be given if the present Previous Examination were made compulsory for female students preparing for Triposes' (1887). Nevertheless when Miss Davies (who resorted to unpleasant texts from the Bible to describe people like the Fawcetts and Sidgwick if they disagreed with her) met Sidgwick to discuss their differences, she was obliged to admit ' "He certainly is a very engaging man"—an expression of real feeling on her part' [*Emily Davies and Girton College*]. She was not a woman to be imposed on by specious personal charm. The special nature of Sidgwick's personality has been described by many well-known men, and just as he expressed his admiration for the personality of Cambridge men like Fawcett[13] in terms of character so his own was always felt by his pupils and colleagues to be entirely an emanation of character. Maitland, talking of his 'teaching the like of which had never come in my way before', described 'the freest and boldest thinking set forth in words which seemed to carry candour and sobriety and circumspection to their furthest limit. I believe no more truthful man than Sidgwick ever lived. I am speaking of a rare intellectual virtue . . . a mind that was indeed marvellously subtle but was showing us its wonderful power simply because even in a lecture-room it could be content with nothing less than the maximum of attainable and communicable truth'. Sorley trying to describe Sidgwick's influence wrote: 'Sidgwick exerted a powerful influence, both intellectual and moral, upon his pupils. But his temperament was too critical, his intellect too evenly balanced, to admit of his teaching a dogmatic system. What he taught was much more a method, an attitude of mind . . . candour, self-criticism and regard for truth'. No wonder it has been suggested that Sidgwick was the original of Daniel Deronda, at least as regards the effect Deronda was supposed to have on others. But the point to make is that Sidgwick was not a 'sport' in his time and place. He had been produced by the Cambridge of his youth just as a later Cambridge of men like Maitland was produced from his. Leslie Stephen in *Some Early Impressions* (Hogarth Press) gives a good account of this formative ethos. He remarks upon the influence of the 'Apostles', of which the most important member in his time was Clerk Maxwell the great physicist; it was to this society that

[12]He had written earlier 'I ask only a fair field and no favour for professional women'.

[13]When Fawcett died in 1884 Sidgwick wrote in his journal: 'He was a hero of a peculiar type, without any outward air of self-sacrifice or suggestion of idealism in his ordinary talk' and a year later when Munro (the editor of *Lucretius*) died: 'Two of the most strongly marked figures and characters of Cambridge have gone in Fawcett and Munro, alike in a certain rugged vigour and naturalness, if in little else'.

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Sidgwick 'declared he owed a greater intellectual debt than to any other of the influences of his youth'. Stephen says this Cambridge was characterized by a belief in candour, an impatience of humbug, and a suspicion of anything in the nature of affectation in manner. Hence no doubt Emily Davies's comment in a letter to her bosom friend in 1868: 'I am well used to the cool Cambridge manner. It is not half so pleasant as the kind, gushing way Oxford men have, but it comes to more'. Stephen says 'our favourite antipathy was the "impostor" ', a Cambridge slang term defined by Sidgwick later as 'a second-rate man who conscientiously thinks himself a first-rate man'. A society that places a high value on character and intellectual virtue instead of on social and intellectual conformity is something that in these days at Cambridge we may look back to with both pride and nostalgia. One is glad to find in it and in Sidgwick's educational work an ancestry or tradition for the enterprise represented by *Scrutiny*. There is no adequate history of Cambridge in the nineteenth century, though abundant materials exist in memoirs, biographies, jottings like Mary Paley Marshall's, letters, and the evidence that is implicit in many a Cambridge man's published works. Winstanley's recent two heavy volumes are really no use at all for the purpose I have in mind, which is to get written not a legalistic history but a cultural one. Instead of being told in terms of statutes it would have to be revealed in studies of the influential thinkers and great teachers of the university, many of whom still exist in living memory among grateful and often eminent old pupils. It is an act of more than piety to record for posterity the work, character and influence of the Sidgwicks and Haddons and Riverses of the past.

Q. D. Leavis.

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HENRY JAMES, HIS SYMBOLISM AND HIS CRITICS[1]

IN a recently published essay I maintained that Henry James allegorized all his life on the basis of his father's theology and psychology—that *The Ambassadors, The Wings of the Dove* and *The Golden Bowl* are not simply novels but a closely articulated account of the workings of divine providence as well. The astonishment and scepticism with which this thesis was received lead me to ask why his readers find it so hard to imagine James as a moralist who employed symbols in a schematic way. It is true that he left us no glosses as did Blake and Coleridge; that the symbolism is never obtrusive, as it sometimes is in Hawthorne and Melville, but this is not a sufficient answer. In the eyes of his best critics James is both a moralist and a symbolist, but has no system of values which relates his morality and his symbols. Some critics, aware that this is an anomalous situation, admit their puzzlement. Others find James a territory to be occupied—they introduce their own systems as links between James's principles and his art. The 'artist's artist' is asked to shoulder the weight of other men's beliefs.

Misreadings are common among this last group. (For example read *Madame de Mauves* and *The Author of Beltraffio* and then try to match these stories with the accounts given of them by recent editors). People who have a hunger for certain kinds of design are likely to overlook the evidence of design in James himself. The economic determinist is helpless before such apparent anomalies as Adam Verver, the millionaire who gets good marks. It is hardly illuminating to say that James usually condemned great wealth but sometimes revealed a weakness for millionaires. Analysis based exclusively on a study of James's personality must often go astray because it relies on the shaky premise that a great artist did not in given instances know what he was doing when he wrote. Rosenzweig has made it clear that James was not aware of the nature of his own Oedipal struggle, and that he identified himself with his father, but since it did not occur to Rosenzweig that he might have made a conscious use of his father's ideas, a deliberate application of the symbolism of the elder James is mistaken for evidence of neurotic distortion. Spender's analysis, which combines Freud and Marx, attempts to do what James has already done—that is, find the moral ties between the individual and his society. Still another

[1]Mr. Anderson prefaced this essay with *The Two Henry Jameses* in *Scrutiny* for September, 1947.

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kind of analysis, a study of the texture of James's style, has produced much that is interesting but nothing that is conclusive as to the presence or absence of a system of values in the novels. Microscopes work badly on cathedrals. F. O. Matthiessen, the most industrious commentator on James at the moment, is particularly shaky on the question of the novelist's moral bias. He cannot clear up for himself the question whether the Right of the father (Eliot) can ever be compatible with the Good of the sons (Dreiser and Farrell). Once again the critic raises a question which James had settled for himself.

All these critical viewpoints have this common property: they stress the artist's alienation from his society—alienation as a stylist, a personality, a moral agent. This theme of alienation has served as a sufficient bar to the understanding of Henry James's most inclusive intention; has obscured the greatness of Hawthorne; has rendered the transcendentalists unintelligible, and has made of Henry Adams's myth of his failure a history of our nineteenth century. If we follow out this assumption it appears that only the alienated great have visions, and that there is a cultural lack which they alone can remedy. William James believed this. It amounts to saying that the artist must at once create a moral climate and enforce a moral judgment—he must outdo Prometheus, provide food as well as fire, and cook our cultural dinner. The system of values which Henry James took from his father involved the denial of this assumption. All men are morally equal because they share the *same* consciousness. The artist does not differ from the rest of us in possessing the vision; he differs in his ability to live up to it through selfless creation. William James fought gallantly against the idea that we shared the same consciousness; his brother accepted it and rejected the notion of the cultural vacuum. The novelist did not ascribe transcendent merit to the artist, or to any mere individual. We are all in the same boat, morally speaking, and the critical consensus which holds that the pursuit of the artist is the only morally responsible one (on the ground that the artist alone has the vision which makes moral judgment possible) is a form of self-righteousness, the self-righteousness of Strether. The novelist laboured to break down the disjunction between the artist and society. But his devoted admirers have laboured to maintain it.

There is no longer any excuse for doing this. If literary tradition, anthropology and psycho-analysis can teach us one thing it is that there is always belief, there are always fantasies tending into myth, and that the artist never makes up the myth he uses. Rather he makes plain what is in our own lives obscure. Everyone is presumably aware that language is a limited instrument which represents consciousness imperfectly. Yet few critics are willing to make James's inference that a great deal of experience shared by millions fails of expression simply because this is so. They would rather assume that the burden of consciousness borne by the artist is of a distinctive kind.

Unless we perceive a continuity between the artist's moral

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sanctions and the rooted popular myth of his time we cannot really judge him at all. If James had not felt in himself the very impulses which he saw crystallized in American manners he could not have understood American manners. Had he not felt himself a sinner he could not have condemned self-righteousness. The courage to do this is rare. It is surprising to us that James had a belief because we seek to hide our beliefs from ourselves. Lionel Trilling has pointed out that Mark Twain's strength as a moralist comes from his sense of participation in the evils he denounced. James's critics love to think of him as alienated or uncommitted because they dare not acknowledge themselves committed. The abstractions *artist* and *society* hide us from ourselves.

James overcame the impulse to hide from himself. He was wholly conscious that he both loved and hated himself—and he knew what in himself he loved and what he hated. That love and that hate were to be found in his culture as well. Its institutions and its manners expressed both. These emotions determined people's relationships to one another as they determined James's relationship to himself. As Mark Schorer points out, Blake had earlier made this parallelism explicit. The commercial, the acquisitive society had become possible, Blake thought, when men began to hate themselves. This society expressed man's inner struggle in the social form of competition—a licensed warfare. It is not by accident that the figure of the young American girl who functions as an arbiter of the values of American life in James and his contemporaries appears in the psychology of the elder James as the 'feminine' element in personality—the conscience. The efforts of Daisy Miller or the heroine of Howells's *Lady of the Aroostook* to achieve a spontaneous moral life are a representation of the struggle going on *within* countless Americans to reconcile their own impulses. These characters are not arbitrarily but directly symbolic of this conflict; that is why they have dramatic interest.

I have charged the critics with foisting their own fantasy of alienation on James, but it remains to show (or suggest) how James managed to symbolize the universality of consciousness. It is possible to get a glimpse of the method by considering some contemporary opinion about James's characters. In his essay on James as a writer of melodrama Jacques Barzun provides us with a clue (all the more useful because he does not view James as a symbolist). Barzun believes that the ends sought by James's people both good and bad are the same, and that the difference between them is a matter of style—of how the money or the girl is pursued. This is in accord with my contention that James made no ultimate moral distinction between individuals. But serious confusion arises when we look at James from the standpoint of the reader of *A Hazard of New Fortunes* or *U.S.A.* Here virtue and vice are not a matter of style but of social analysis. By a kind of animism we lodge the good and bad forces derived from our study of economics, politics and history in distinct individuals or groups and in this way deprive ourselves of the opportunity of understanding and

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judging any particular individual. This animistic convention has become the stuff of modern melodrama. It is an imaginative recession because it sacrifices appraisal of the quality of people's lives for a mess of sociological pottage. Here, then, are two forms of melodrama—the first shows us people seeking the same things and responsible to a single standard, the second presents individuals as acting in response to forces or acted upon by forces and in neither case responsible. Terms appropriate to the discussion of both forms of melodrama are found in most James criticism. I quote from an address by Theodora Bosanquet, James's amanuensis.

> 'To put it briefly, there is always a kind of artist in his novels—an artist in life and manners, someone with an innocent eye—to give the right tones and perspectives. Moreover the story is often concerned with the development of the artist's perceptions. At a certain point in that development, the artist—like Strether in *The Ambassadors*—is changed, converted. Old values are dissolved, replaced by other, finer values. He is, one might say, saved.
>
> Saved from what? Well, saved from the world of material values, from the corruption of the almighty dollar or the fatal lust of possession. The world was, as he saw it, a pitful of creatures of prey thrusting their greedy claws into innocent victims . . . Wherever he looked Henry James saw fineness apparently sacrificed to grossness, beauty to avarice, truth to a bold front. His novels are a repeated exposure of this wickedness, a reiterated and persistent plea for the deliverance of the spirit from bondage. When his fine central characters *are* set free, they usually celebrate their liberty by a renunciation. "That, you see", as Strether says in the final passage of *The Ambassadors*, "is my only logic. Not out of the whole affair, to have got anything for myself" '.

Miss Bosanquet follows Barzun in observing that James is preoccupied with the style we betray in pursuing our ends. But she introduces two considerations which make her seem a representative animist, one who views the world as split into warring camps. The first is the notion of the artist or observer; the second is 'the world of material values'. If James split the world in two he is not a melodramatist in Barzun's sense, for in such a world it is not your style but your status that counts. Nor is he a believer in moral equality, because moral equality implies that we must stand or fall together—that the same struggle is going on in every one of us. If there are spiritual and material ends there may well be quite inescapable differences between the means employed to gain them, and the artist will emerge as the prototype of all those who pursue the former. Miss Bosanquet's assumption that James split the world up in this way colours her conclusion that he wished to deliver the spirit from bondage. She forgets what James never forgot for an instant—that this means delivering us from ourselves. That is why she is so wrong about Strether. To neglect the poet's

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struggle with himself is to surrender yourself to a world of forces and factors (quite as legendary as St. Augustine's) and to give the artist a sacrosanct role. Strether is about the loneliest figure in James's developing universe because he impedes rather than hastens the process by which (as James sees us) we all become aware of ourselves—which is to say aware that our consciousness is shared. He denies the war within himself. He is, and was meant to be, the supreme instance of selfishness, for to deny that war is to deny the brotherhood and the moral equality of men. Strether renounces nothing: he makes the most exorbitant claim a man can make—the claim to righteousness.

It follows that the principal flaw in our criticism of Henry James has been our readiness to identify ourselves with the artist or observer—to use art as a screen and make society responsible for our sense of guilt and inadequacy. The fact that we are happy to dwell in Strether's consciousness is the very thing that James reproaches us with. We will take nothing for ourselves, say we, our hands are not red, we are not acquisitive, the pleasures of art, the pleasures of the 'point of view', are pure, disinterested, free of guilt. But this is, in the eyes of Henry James, the worst of evils, self-righteousness. The assertion that the artist has been an alien in our culture becomes, in the hands of the critic, an expression of this very self-righteousness, and James's moral reproach ever more insistent. Criticism must learn, as painfully no doubt as in the case of Blake, that James's vision is not partial but total; that it embraces what Blake called the 'contraries'.

I have already suggested that James held that men were morally equal because they shared the same consciousness. All their efforts to distinguish themselves from one another by getting money or position must fail in the end. Using the conventional terms we may say that it is the office of James's realism to represent these efforts; it is the office of his symbolism to represent their instructive failure. In other words, it is only by trying Strether's game or Kate Croy's game that one learns its futility and emerges as Susan Shepherd or the humbled Charlotte Stant. It is clear that what appears on the realistic plane as renunciation or failure will appear on the symbolic level as success, as triumph for humanity. By struggling to distinguish ourselves from one another we learn that consciousness, and consequently humanity, is unified.

Further reflection suggests that a differentiation between realism and symbolism is too rough an approximation The attempts we make to distinguish ourselves in business, high society, the arts, are quite as symbolic as are the triumphs of self-knowledge which make us aware of our unified consciousness and destiny. Our efforts to dissever ourselves from one another or from the god within us are matched by the efforts of the god to unite us with our fellows and himself. The one aim is no more or less 'real', no more or less human than the other. So ends Jamesian 'ambiguity'. It is a considered ambivalence which is used to represent the coming transvaluation of all values. James's critics will have to forego his

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ambiguity as a shield for their own moral isolation. James is all too clear—perhaps cocksure is the best word for such complete moral certitude.

It is now possible to characterize (although sketchily) James's use of symbols. The first point is that James does not write as if his symbols and his characters existed on two different levels affording two avenues of approach to the reader. Hawthorne's scarlet letter has a variety of meanings for the reader; James's golden bowl has a variety of meanings for the characters in the novel. For the reader it is simply an image of the nature of man. James is charting the struggle within man which will lead to a consummation —the unification of consciousness. To do so he requires co-ordinates which we may call symbols. The golden bowl is one such co-ordinate. It has a different meaning for each of the characters in the novel because it images human nature and each of the characters is one of the components of that nature. One might compare the bowl to the shield which the physicist sets up in his tube to classify and measure the electrical energies present. It is the focus at which meaning becomes apparent. It is not primarily a symbol with a referent because it does not stand for a situation—it reveals a situation by interrupting the flow of moral energies, and it reveals the whole situation because each character reacts to it.

Our common sense rebels at this. We ask—How can these characters be both people and forces? But we might as well ask how there can be a villain or a hero. We know quite well that the one cannot exist without the other, and that both reflect impulses present in ourselves. *The Golden Bowl* is about the reader, and in structure resembles those experiences in which the reader learns most about himself and his impulses—his dreams. James employs the logic of the dream in fiction. His demand is that we immerse ourselves in the process of life as he envisions it. To do so is to perceive that every object, every name, place, or figure of speech has a significance which shifts in accordance with the character of the impulse which apprehends it.

In brief, the work of art, as James conceived it, marries our effort to distinguish ourselves and the effort of the god within to unite us in such a way that there is nothing left over, no point from which to view the process as an 'artist' or observer. You *are* that process, you are Henry James, or John Smith or mankind. James will have your whole allegiance or nothing. You must become his creature (or, formally, the creature of the unified consciousness) for the world he has made is not one from which you can take bits and pieces to fit into your own. James has the final arrogance of the artist. He wants all men to live in his works. (His theology justifies this demand just as Blake's does: 'Art is the ritual by which life can achieve the condition of art', is the way Mark Schorer puts it).

But one cannot discuss the use made of symbols by James the melodramatist without recalling other kinds of drama in which our doubts and uncertainties bulk large. A critic writing about Cézanne

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concludes that 'If nothing constrains us from outside it is because we are our entire exterior'. Nothing does seem to constrain James from without—literally everything became tributary to his sense of himself. Just as Cézanne did away with three-dimensional empty space that he might take possession of solidity, so James did away with nature and the non-human in order that his scene might be suffused with what had 'interest' for him. So profound was his self-knowledge that we recognize ourselves everywhere in James. Yet both in his novels and in the psychology on which they draw one striking limitation does appear. They do not include an account of the Oedipal struggle which defines and delimits the ego. James could not create or understand tragedy because he could not understand any more than Walt Whitman could that it felt different to be somebody else.

If the logic which determines the relationship of James's symbols and forces is the logic of the dream, in which no one symbol or impulse has its full meaning unless it is illuminated by the presence of each of the others, we cannot discuss him without reference to the popular myth of his time. We shall have to discard the notion that he was the artist's artist. We may apply to him what Schorer says of Blake: 'Blake did not attempt a "pure" art. The holiness of art proceeds from the holiness of life'.

A fresh reading of James demands more work. We must (for example) compare his use of the motif of the American's submission to European experience with the fabulous journey which the characters of Howells are forever undertaking; Mark Twain's description of the possessions in the Grangerford parlour with James's sketch of Mrs. Lowder's drawing-room; Henry Adams' use of the Virgin and James's use of Madame de Vionnet. This is a difficult kind of undertaking—an attempt to make a chronicle of the American imagination—but it is far more firmly based than the criticism which separates the artist from other men and makes his imagination seem a sport. His ability to inform and control his past does differ from ours, but I am inclined to agree with James that the difference is one of degree, not of kind.

It will be objected that I leave no scope for those who wish to investigate the quality and colour of James's sensibility as distinct from other men's; that I rule out inquiry under the aspect of art. But differences cannot be understood except against a background of likeness. The history of James criticism suggests that treating the qualities of his imagination without considering the ends it serves shuts us up inside James's world and makes it impossible to get out. Those who deal with literature as if it committed a man to nothing in particular save literature either employ an aesthetic bulging with assumptions about morality, politics, psychology and so on, or else rely on the resources of the author at hand. Coleridge's myth of the imagination (which so brilliantly illuminates Coleridge) is often used to interpret other people's myths, and so we may pile myth upon myth and Platonize forever. At present criticism is on the one hand aesthetic, on the other socio-

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logical. Henry James has been made to serve both these interests. Neither approach is capable of coping with Henry James at his best —the Henry James of the last three completed novels—'novels' which comprise a great poem about the nature and destiny of man.

If (as Cyril Connolly and others suggest) the myth is really the point at which science and the imagination intersect, there is no need to invent derivative parallel terminologies when discussing works of art. The critic may take his stand at this point and become a moralist. We may use psycho-analysis and anthropology freely in studying James and other artists—and if we do so I think that we will find that we have given dignity once more to the study of literature. If works of art are really representative of human nature, literature may once more be conceived as wisdom and treated with a high seriousness.

Much of the writing about James has had the tone of family gossip—the piety of narcissism which dreads self-revelation. When we cease paying him homage and begin to acknowledge his immersion in the past which produced us it will be possible to place him. He knew very well that in our self-righteousness we would love Strether just as he had. But this is more than a literary joke, and it is time we saw the point. Strether is the worst of us all.

QUENTIN ANDERSON.

CONTEMPORARY FRENCH CRITICISM

We have received the following:

Dear Sir,

I am a sincere admirer of the high critical level maintained through the war years by *Scrutiny* and of the solidity and insight of its literary valuations—the soundest perhaps in Great Britain. But the article by H. A. Mason in your Spring number on 'André Malraux and his Critics' hardly seemed equal to the best of the essays you have published. Picking two recent books on Malraux and generalizing on the methods and state of present-day French criticism was not justified. It happens that Malraux has not received criticism of lasting value, and that the two critics taken as representative of their country were in those two books naïve, superficial, immature. But no one considers them as typical of French criticism to-day, although one must say in all fairness that Gaëtan Picon has since risen to a much higher stature.

There are very remarkable critics to-day in France, who should be examined if one is to generalize about French criticism—a

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dangerous generalization in which to indulge! I would quote, in their order of excellence and giving them ranks as if they were docile students, Maurice Blanchot (who writes in *l'Arche*), Claude-Edmonde Magny, Georges Bataille (director of the remarkable review *Critique*), Albert Beguin, Thierry-Maulnier, Etiemble, Aimé Patri, Georges Blin (*Fontaine*), Robert Kemp.

I hold no brief for French critics and have handled them roughly in a recent book (*Writers and their Critics*, Cornell University Press), but they should be judged on their best attempts and not on distinctly second-rate productions.

Sincerely yours,

Yale University. HENRI PEYRE.

MR. MASON replies:

As I don't suppose it is for want of attention that M. Peyre has not discerned the underlying intentions of my article, I think I may properly take space in this number to re-state a position which has bearings transcending the personal case and to make a few observations which would be out of place in any other part of *Scrutiny*.

The saving clauses liberally sprinkled throughout my article were intended to indicate that its pretensions to finality were extremely modest. I expressly stated that the unfavourable verdict I had formed was based on unrelated *sondages* made for special purposes and wrote, 'clearly only a large-scale investigation could do justice to the problem'. Elsewhere in the article I said, 'an examination of the two most recent books about André Malraux by representative critics is offered here as a *gesture towards* . . . a determined scrutiny of the French literary press . . . and as *part* of the evidence'. (I have added the italics). And in concluding I referred to all the limitations and the modest claims to be fully representative of the selection of French criticism presented. The upshot of my argument was that supposing *Scrutiny* were anxious to enter into relations with French literary reviews—relations of the kind maintained by *The Criterion*—my investigations, so far as they went, would lead me to counsel extreme caution. This remains my considered opinion.

Underlying my article was an assumption which I thought did not need arguing: that nothing like a consensus of opinion has been reached about the standing of Proust, Péguy, Claudel, Apollinaire, Gide, Valéry, Malraux, to say nothing of more recent authors and that the erratic judgments which one meets in English and American criticism of these writers were in part due to the failure of French criticism to come to even a minimum of agreement. (A desirable minimum would, of course, leave room for an equally desirable amount of disagreement). That, in short the foreigner does not get the help from French criticism that he might expect from a

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flourishing critical climate of opinion.

M. Peyre seems to suggest that the absence of any authoritative criticism of Malraux is a curious accident, an exceptional case, which I had maliciously seized on to present a *sottisier*. What I wished to show was that current opinion about one of the outstanding (in the sense of in the public eye) figures of our time is after all these years still extremely fluid—and not least in France itself. I was not aware that the case of Malraux was in any way exceptional. Readers of this journal have had other examples before them (Aragon, Apollinaire). I thought there would be fairly general agreement with my complaint that the foreign reader did not get much help in forming his judgment about living authors from, say, *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, even in its best days.

But to return to Malraux. It had long been felt, I believe, in *Scrutiny* circles, that, like many of his contemporaries, Malraux enjoyed an excessive reputation and that in particular *La Condition Humaine* was not a masterpiece. At the same time this opinion was felt to be still a minority view (as a sample of the majority view I quoted Mr. Allen's opinion) and a dissenting view would require especially careful statement and justification. In short, Malraux was a fit subject for a *Scrutiny* article. I rashly offered to undertake the work and re-read all the novels, made notes, only to find that my opinion was turning out so unfavourable that I was bound to suspect myself of eccentricity. I therefore hunted up all the critical articles on Malraux I could find and began to compare their views with those I had tentatively formed. M. Peyre himself knows how satisfying these articles on Malraux are. During this time a book on Malraux appeared written by M. Picon, which (*pace* M. Peyre) had an extremely good press. The critics who wrote the reviews of M. Picon's book thought, as I did, that the book was *a fair representative of the criticism produced to date on the work of André Malraux*. I threw in M. Mauriac for good measure. I tried to show by quoting these two critics what I thought were the chief *cruces* of Malraux criticism. At the same time I indicated the features in their work which in my view were *representative of French criticism as a whole*. I indicated each feature separately to make the limited application explicit. Of course, neither M. Picon nor M. Mauriac would figure among the best French critics on the strength of these books. That I was not concerned to illustrate the *extreme lapses* of French criticism may be seen by anyone who reads the books and notes how many of the worst passages I simply glossed over. My concern was with the average level and with certain aspects of French criticism which, I thought, were partly responsible for the difficulties experienced by the foreign reader who has to rely on the native critic.

Hence I still do not feel that I was required to single out any one critic or group of critics. However, since M. Peyre has offered a graded list, let me take his head boy, Maurice Blanchot, particularly as his *Faux Pas* has also been recommended by C. A. Hackett (*Scrutiny*, Vol xiv, No. 4, p. 316) and, I believe, this

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book has been praised in *Horizon*. I have already given an account in this journal of some of the difficulties of the Swiss public (difficulties in which I shared) in forming an opinion about the work of the so-called Existentialists and in particular J. P. Sartre and A. Camus. Every clandestine review that could be smuggled across the frontier was eagerly read and passed from hand to hand. M. Blanchot was, I believe, among the first critics to deal with these two writers. I did not succeed in obtaining his articles in periodical form, but eventually some time in 1944 his *Faux Pas* reached Switzerland and I read very carefully the essays dealing with Camus and Sartre. I have lost or destroyed the notes on which the various reports I submitted to *Scrutiny* were based. But I will reproduce the spirit of them.

Le Mythe d'Oreste.

'La pièce de M. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Les Mouches*, qui est d'une valeur et d'une signification exceptionelles, s'est coulée assez exactement dans le mythe d'Oreste'. 'Il y a, semble-t-il, accord suffisant entre le sens que M. Sartre veut introduire dans le mythe ancien et les symboles traditionnels qui y sont attachés. Cet accord est une des forces de la pièce'. M. Blanchot apparently finds no difficulty in holding this view. His *only* criticism of the play is that the opposition to Orestes is so feeble and comic that we do not get the powerful impression of sacrilege which would give the play tragic force. 'A la grandeur d'Oreste il manque d'être impie contre une piété véritable, de bafouer des dieux qui soient vraiment des dieux et de provoquer l'écroulement d'un monde titanesque que sa liberté pourra détruire justement parce qu'elle n'est rien'.

Le Roman de L'Etranger.

M. Blanchot tries to maintain what seems to me an untenable thesis: that the hero of the novel 'est par rapport à lui-même, comme si un autre le voyait et parlait de lui. Ses actes l'absorbent entièrement. Il est tout à fait en dehors. Il n'a d'autre vie intérieure que les mouvements les plus extérieurs de la sensibilité. Il est d'autant plus soi qu'il semble moins penser, moins sentir, être d'autant moins intime avec soi'. 'Il est l'absence profonde, l'abîme où il n'y a peut-être rien, où îl y a peut-être tout, que suppose tout spectacle humain'. Holding this view, M. Blanchot is obliged to condemn the final pages of explicit commentary. 'Il y a un changement de ton assez gênant entre l'objectivité presque absolue du récit, objectivité qui est sa vérité profonde, et les dernières pages où l'étranger exprime ce qu'il pense et ce qu'il sent en face de la mort et de la vie'. M. Blanchot would have preferred the hero to die in silence. 'On se rappelle les admirables scènes de certains livres de William Faulkner, celles de *Sanctuaire* par exemple où la justice est aussi l'instrument d'une effrayante fatalité'. The review contains no other criticism than the point I was glad to steal from it: that Camus did not intend his outsider to be the conventional hero who defies the conventions of society.

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The point in making this selection from *Faux Pas* is two-fold. The books discussed are now fairly accessible and have been criticized in other reviews as well as in *Scrutiny*. These two reviews can be compared with the other French reviews of the two books. I can only say, judging by the little *dossier* I collected on each book that M. Blanchot is only to be distinguished from his fellow reviewers by the absence of any marked characteristics.

My sole quarrel with the point of view represented by M. Peyre's letter is that it might tend to distract our attention from a state of affairs which has significant bearings on our evaluation of the cultural health of France to-day. The stray scraps of evidence I assembled have not any conclusive force. Even the most carefully considered opinion cannot be better than the evidence on which it rests. Beyond saying that I have not deliberately overlooked any first-class criticism I would not wish to carry polemic further. Indeed it would be unbecoming not to express gratitude for the challenge provided by M. Peyre to make a different approach starting from the high lights of French criticism. The names M. Peyre supplies are not unfamiliar to me, but, apart from works of pure scholarship, the names are only attached in my mind to scattered articles and possibly (in the case of M. Blanchot, I am told, certainly) I have not seen the best work of these critics. A number of books have come to hand since last Spring. The omission of all mention of *Critique* in my article was due to misinformation. I was led to believe that any remarks I had to make would be in the nature of an epitaph. *Critique* is, however, still appearing and in the next report I submit to this journal I hope to deal fairly with this along with all the fresh material that can be obtained. It would indeed be a pleasure to report that M. Picon was also impercipient of the general literary climate when he wrote: 'Où sont les critiques qui jugent et savent juger? Où sont ceux qui possèdent le sentiment de la distance? La plupart, dans une égalité approximative, se plaisent à confondre tous les noms, à brouiller toutes les mesures. Impuissance, timidité du jugement, habitude de la servilité historique? Quoi qu'il en soit, les ouvrages qui traitent de la littérature contemporaine aboutissent régulièrement à la jungle d'un index alphabétique où il est vain de chercher l'apparence d'une hiérarchie: à cet égard, la différence n'est pas telle entre ceux que nous devons à M. Lanson et à Albert Thibaudet, à M. Baldensperger et à René Lalou. Et maintenant, qu'un critique mette un écrivain hors de pair et lui consacre un ouvrage, il faut y voir le plus souvent moins l'expression d'un jugement que l'aveu d'une affinité tout personnelle . . . Ne serait-il pas opportun que, dans la critique des Lettres, règnént enfin d'autres moeurs?'

The article in the Spring number was, and was intended to be, merely an opening skirmish. The attempt to establish contacts on the continent has not been abandoned and such friendly stimulus as that administered by M. Peyre will continue to be welcomed and heeded.

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HENRY IV—PART I

THE increased volume of work which has recently been devoted to Shakespeare's series of English historical plays has not been without its uses. In particular it has served to bring these works decisively out of the sphere of patriotic commonplace to which they had often been consigned by relating them firmly to the political conceptions of the Elizabethan period. The work, however, is not without dangers of its own. There is a very real risk that erudition, in its efforts to relate the plays to their period, may end by obscuring the personal contribution that makes them most valuable as works of art. For these plays—and more especially those dealing with the reign of Henry IV and his son—contain something of far deeper and more permanent significance than the social and political commonplaces of a departed age; they illuminate these commonplaces by the same profoundly personal vision which, at a more mature stage, developed further to produce Shakespeare's greatest plays. The true artist, when circumstances induce him to approach political problems, brings with him a concern for permanent human values which, while never limited to the momentary issue, may be none the less profoundly illuminating to those who can combine a serious interest in contemporary developments with the preservation, often equally necessary, of a proper detachment. To bear this truth in mind and to trace in detail the unfolding of a personal interpretation of his inherited theme is to throw light upon an important stage in the development of Shakespeare's art.

The broad conception of the whole trilogy, initially accepted by Shakespeare as his starting-point, is clear enough. It emerges generally speaking from historical and dramatic works previously in existence and fits in with the current conceptions of the age. The three plays, as well as *Richard II* which preceded them, are evidently conceived as studies in kingship. The royal office is plainly regarded throughout as basing its claims to obedience upon divine ordination. The power of the King, a power conveyed upon him by God, is conferred as a guarantee of social order and of that acceptance of 'degree' which cannot be denied without plunging society into anarchy and chaos. This conception is already clearly present in the opening scene of the first part of *Henry IV*. Bolingbroke, newly come to the throne, is weighed down from the first by recent memories of feudal anarchy and internal war. His opening speech has for its background the bitter memory of 'civil butchery', of strife between armies 'All of one nature, of one substance bred', clashes within the body politic that can only serve to wound and destroy it. Finding his country still 'shaken' and made 'wan with care' by these civil disasters, it is his desire and duty to propose a higher aim in the following of which the factions

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so recently at one another's throats may find a common unity. It is for this reason and in this spirit that Henry calls his barons, united under the 'blessed Cross', to the liberation of the sepulchre of Christ. The crusade will serve both to calm the political passions which Henry himself exploited to reach the throne and to provide a foundation for the national unity which he now as King sincerely desires.

It is at this point that Shakespeare, though still using traditional conceptions, begins to unfold a personal interpretation of his historical material. In calling for a crusade Henry is moved by motives in which selfish calculation are oddly mixed with a true desire for the general good. As crowned King he genuinely wishes to follow his vocation by uniting his subjects in a worthy and religious enterprise; but as usurper he hopes that his proposal will 'busy giddy minds with foreign quarrels' (*Part II*, IV, v) and so distract attention from the way in which he himself came to the throne. In other words—and here Shakespeare's thought is clearly working on traditional lines—Henry's desire to play properly the part of a King is hindered past mending by a flaw in the way in which he came to the throne. His overthrow and murder of Richard II, a crime not only against common humanity but still more against the divine foundation of order centred on the crown, fatally produces the very strife and division which he now aims at ending. No sooner has he stated his purpose than 'heavy news' comes 'all athwart' from Wales to force for the first time what will turn out to be a life-long postponement of Henry's project. The reign which opens with the call to a crusade ends, after years of weariness and disillusion with death in a room 'called Jerusalem' which is fated to be his nearest approach to the Holy Land; and in between it has seen little but rebellion, plot and counterplot, and battles where victory serves only to sow the seed of further domestic strife.

If the whole conception of these plays could be summed up in this way their interest would lie only in the skill with which Shakespeare had unfolded what was, after all, a completely traditional scheme. The fact is, however, that his real conception, far from ending here, has its true beginning at this point. Its true originality begins to appear when the political is over-shadowed by the personal interest. Henry IV is punished for his past sins not only as King in the weariness which increasingly overtakes him and in the growing sense of impotence which sometimes raises him to moments of tragic intensity, but as father in the most intimate concerns of his life. It is here that Shakespeare, still using inherited and familiar material, shows the true originality of his conception. For Prince Hal who is destined to become the incarnation of political competence and to achieve all his father's desires, is at the same time 'a scourge' in the hands of God, a continual reminder to Henry of his 'displeasing service' in the past. This disappointment, which accompanies the father through his own life and is not wholly dispelled by his apparent transformation at Shrewsbury, is related

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ultimately to unresolved contradictions in the family character. Henry's first speech to his son (III, ii) is most revealing in its remarkable blend of true personal pathos and political calculation. The former shades indeed almost insensibly into the latter. That the father is genuinely wounded by his son's behaviour, that he is moved with 'tenderness', that he 'hath desired to see' him more often, is certain; but as we read the long speech we cannot help suspecting that the speaker's only true *moral* criterion is *political* success. To say this is to put one's finger upon the motive that impels the House of Lancaster all through these plays. Henry's criticism of the prodigality of Richard, 'the skipping king', is expressed with a linguistic freshness that draws freely upon the vernacular—'*carded* his state', '*capering* wits', 'glutted, gorged, and full'—and reflects the keenness of his interest in the intricacies of political behaviour. That interest is a constant feature of the family. Behind it, however, Shakespeare is careful to convey a significant note of falseness and moral deficiency. Bolingbroke, in his own words, '*stole* all courtesy from heaven', 'dressed' himself in a humility which is clearly less a moral virtue than the conscious device of policy. For Henry the criterion of morality tends always to be success; and that being so, it is not surprising that his son should have learned from the first to separate the promptings of humanity from the necessities of political behaviour and that filial tenderness in him should exist side by side with a readiness to subject all personal considerations to public achievement. In the realization, born of bitter experience, that the quest for this achievement can be an illusion lies the secret of the tragic note which dominates the father's later years.

These considerations illuminate considerably Shakespeare's conception of Prince Hal and show that the developments later revealed in *Henry V*[1] are already substantially present in his father. It might almost be said, indeed, that the motives which underlie the behaviour of the family throughout the trilogy are revealed in the Prince's opening soliloquy (I, ii). These motives in turn spring at least in part from the nature of the material which the dramatist inherited. In writing his play Shakespeare's freedom of conception was faced by what might have seemed at first sight a grave limitation: the necessity of squaring his account of the Prince's character with a traditional story as naïve in its moral values as it was familiar in all its details. The Prince, as Shakespeare found him in the popular account on which he based his play, was an outstanding example of the familiar story of the dissolute young man who underwent a kind of moral conversion when faced by grave responsibilities and finally made good in the great sphere of political action to which he was called. The story, conceived in these terms, was too familiar and too popular to be ignored by a practical dramatist; on the other hand its conception

[1]I have tried to interpret the spirit of this play in a previous article in *Scrutiny*, March, 1941.

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of human character and motive was too naïvely optimistic to appeal to a Shakespeare moving at this stage towards the mood that was shortly to produce *Hamlet*. Faced with this dilemma Shakespeare chose to accept the very improbability of the story and to turn it to account. The Prince, from his very first appearance, looks forward to a reformation which, just because it is too good to be true, is seen to be moved by a political calculation which clearly reflects the character of his father. If his character is to change, as he announces in his very first soliloquy, it is because a transformation of this kind will attract popularity: for 'nothing pleaseth but rare accidents'. The whole process of 'reformation', as the Prince himself describes it, has a surface quality which Shakespeare is clearly concerned to emphasize. It is seen 'glittering' with metallic speciousness over previous faults, 'like bright metal on a sullen ground'; and its purpose, above all, is to '*show* more goodly' and 'attract more eyes'. The conversion, thus transformed from an edifying example to an instrument of political success, enters fully into the permanent characteristics of the House of Lancaster. The future Henry V, already regarded as an example of the perfect political figure, begins by consciously abstaining from the finer aspects of human nature; for behind Shakespeare's acceptance of a traditional story lies the conviction that success in politics implies a spiritual loss, commonly involves the sacrifice of more attractive qualities which are distinctively personal.

The character of the Prince as it is developed through the play brings home this conception with a variety of detail. It is the character of a man whose keen if limited intelligence is placed consistently at the service of his political interests. If the politician is not so much a man of intellectual subtlety and spiritual discernment as one who can envisage with clarity the practical end of his activities and devote all his faculties without division to its attainment then the Prince is a complete example of the type. His intelligence is of the kind that, operating entirely in the practical order, sees through all pretences and evasions to the concrete issues that underlie them. The reputation of Douglas as a warrior, for instance, does not blind him to his true nature and when he describes him he stresses the same lack of imagination which Shakespeare later found in the Greek heroes of *Troilus and Cressida*. Douglas is the man who 'kills me six or seven dozens of Scots at a breakfast' and then complains of 'this quiet life', the man who is not above filling out his prowess in battle with unimaginative boasting which strikes Prince Henry, in his ironical detachment, as simply ridiculous:

> *Prince*: He that rides at high speed and with his pistol kills a sparrow flying.
> *Falstaff*: You have hit it.
> *Prince*: So did he never the sparrow. (II, iv).

For the Prince Douglas is an enemy, but his attitude would not have been different had he been an ally. In either case the firm

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if limited judgment would be based on the same clear narrow principles of expedience. His intelligence is of the kind that judges all men by their value in relation to a coldly conceived political scheme; that is the reason both for his success and his inhumanity.

This detachment in the Prince's attitude towards friend and foe is based in turn upon a series of moral deficiences which Shakespeare is concerned to stress from the first moment. His relationship to those around him, invalidated by the peculiar mental reservation which invariably accompanies it, is necessarily unsatisfactory. The Prince is to all appearances capable of sinking himself into his surroundings and meeting his 'low' associates on their own level; but his attitude to them, when he is alone and expresses his inmost feelings, shows a certain false humility that is most revealing: 'I have sounded the very base-string of humility. Sirrah, I am sworn brother to a leash of drawers; and can call them all by their christen names, as Tom, Dick, and Francis' (II, iv). The confidence with which he moves among the 'lower orders'—I choose the phrase, with all its implications, of set purpose—expresses itself, moreover, in a peculiar and typical tone. The quality of many of his observations upon those whom he encourages to regard themselves as his friends reflects a coarseness which is, in the true sense of the word, vulgar and thoroughly characteristic of his entirely amoral personality. Shakespeare brings this home to us in numerous apparently petty turns of phrase: 'If there come a hot June and this civil buffetting hold, we shall buy maidenheads as they buy hob-nails, by the hundreds' (II, iv). Spoken of itself in one of the tavern scenes of this play we might pass over phrasing of this type; but Shakespeare brings us into contact with the kind of feeling that prompted it too often for us to ignore it in the long run. Falstaff, whose relationship to the Prince lies at the heart of the whole play, is the particular butt of a kind of intensity in grossness which is surely revealing. After the trick played on him at Eastcheap, he '*lards* the lean earth as he walks along' (II, ii); and in the great parody of the relationship between the King and his son the Prince heaps upon him such a list of epithets as 'bolting-hutch of beastliness', 'swollen parcel of dropsies', 'huge bombard of sack' and 'stuffed cloak-bag of guts' (II, iv). The insistence upon this type of imagery, so lacking in the spontaneous imaginative warmth that characterizes Falstaff's fleshliness, is certainly intentional. It is as though the Prince, whose every action is based on calculation, felt for Falstaff, who represents in himself the vitality and the weakness of human flesh, the semi-conscious repulsion felt by the cold practical intellect for something which it can neither understand, ignore, nor, in the last resort, use. The Prince, echoing Falstaff's idiom, brings to it a cold, efficient intensity that points to an underlying aversion. The flesh, with which the finished politician needs to reckon, is nevertheless an object of repulsion to him. Beneath the burlesque and the rowdiness we may already look forward to the ultimate rejection of Falstaff. That rejection indeed is actually anticipated in the same scene. Falstaff, in a

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plea that is not less pathetic for being a parody based on monstruous presumption, concludes by begging the Prince not to banish him: 'banish plump Jack and banish all the world' (II, iv). Banish Falstaff, in other words, and banish everything that cannot be reduced to an instrument of policy in the quest for empty success. It is true to the Prince's character and to the tragedy of his family that he already replies without hesitation 'I do, I will'.

The tracing of a common destiny working itself out through character in the actions of the family of Lancaster is, then, an essential part of Shakespeare's conception. It is not, however, the whole. In many of the political plays written by Shakespeare at this period we are aware that the individual in whose actions are represented are in fact bound together in character as different aspects of an embracing whole; their virtues and their faults, their successes and failures are inter-dependent parts of a world whose unity is to be sought in the author's experience projected into the complete conception of the play. In *Troilus and Cressida*, as I have tried to show elsewhere,[2] this unity of characters connected by complementary qualities and related imagery is obviously of fundamental importance; but it exists already in the Second Part of *Henry IV* and is at least foreshadowed in the first. For the rebel leaders in this play, when they attempt to translate their aspirations into action, are affected by a flaw not fundamentally dissimilar from that which dominates the royal camp. If Henry IV's kingship is rendered sterile in its higher aspirations by the fact that his seizure of the crown involved the murder of his predecessor and was prompted by egoism the same is true of those who, having helped to bring him to the throne, now wish to see his power curbed or destroyed. The part played by the rebels in Henry's rise to power is stressed from the very beginning. It is, indeed, a chief point in the presentation of their case. Worcester, whose first appearance involves a clash with the King, refers in his very first speech to:

> that same greatness too which our own hands
> Hath holp to make so portly. (I, iii).

A little later in the same scene Hotspur puts the relationship in less flattering terms. He describes his associates as the 'base second means', 'the cords, the ladder, or the hangman' involved in Richard's murder and is at pains to emphasize that what they have done is criminal, committed in 'an unjust behalf'. The fact is that it was desire for power which prompted the rebel leaders to crime, and now it is mutual fear, itself the consequence of crime, that makes their clash inevitable. Henry, conscious that his own power was criminally obtained, cannot help suspecting that those who once followed their own interest in dethroning a king may do so again; and the rebels (or the more reflective of them) understand that the King must think in this way and that they themselves can

[2] *Scrutiny*, December, 1938.

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therefore never be safe. The result is an endless mistrust, the consequences of which continue until they fatally conclude at Shrewsbury. The preliminaries of that battle are in themselves highly significant. Both sides at heart desire peace, the rebels because they know they are not strong enough to win, the King because he realizes in the light of experience that the disunity in his kingdom is not one which battle, however victorious, can resolve. Reason, indeed, demands peace and unity; but the consequences of the original crime against order and therefore against reason are still there and need to work themselves out in blood. The King makes Worcester and Vernon a generous offer of peace, seeing in peace a restoration of natural order based on the free recognition of just and beneficent authority. His behaviour in doing so is that proper to a King. He uses the familiar image of the planets to drive home his contrast between selfish anarchy and ordered peace:

> will you again unknit
> This churlish knot of all-abhorred war?
> And move in that obedient orb again
> Where you did give a fair and natural light,
> And be no more an exhaled meteor,
> A prodigy of fear, and a portent
> Of broached mischief to the unborn times? (V, i).

Henry speaks here as he had spoken at the opening of the Crusade, as a King fulfilling the terms of his vocation. He calls for unity, using the accepted imagery; but the origins of his power, which he would now wish to forget, make themselves felt in their endless consequences to frustrate the lawfulness of his intentions.

Worcester's reaction to the offer serves to bring out a parallel weakness in the rebel camp. In the figure of Worcester Shakespeare sought to study the type of the political courtier. Persuasiveness and reason, born of cunning and experience, are his gods; in the early scenes we see him restraining the impetuosity of Hotspur basing his argument on the very appeal to expediency that Henry himself uses to his son; for Hotspur's impatience, he tells him, is such that it 'loseth men's hearts' (III, i) and compromises their chances of success. Yet Worcester, all reason and moderation as he appears, is a rebel and, being a rebel in the name of interest, he is driven to exclude the operation of reason as the most dangerous enemy of his projects. For reason, according to the original conception, is necessarily on the side of order, of kingship, and rebellion owes its origin to the promptings of selfish passion against rational restraint. Worcester stresses this flaw in their position to his fellow-conspirators:

> For well you know we of the offering side
> Must keep aloof from strict arbitrement,
> And stop all sight-holes, every loop from whence
> The eye of reason may pry in upon us. (IV, i).

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Rebellion, according to the convention which Shakespeare accepted as the starting-point of his political plays, is based upon the exclusion of reason, though it takes a rebel as rational as Worcester so to define it. Priding himself on his realistic attitude to political events, he is yet driven first to shut out reason and then to conceal the fact that peace has been offered by the King and that the battle itself has become unnecessary. The reasons he gives to Vernon are highly significant:

> It is not possible, it cannot be,
> The king should keep his word in loving us;
> He will suspect us still, and find a time
> To punish this offence in other faults . . .
> . . . treason is but trusted like the fox
> Who, ne'er so tame, so cherish'd and lock'd up,
> Will have a wild trick of his ancestors. (V, ii).

Worcester's distrust, like Henry's tragedy, has its roots far in the past. It owes its existence to the original crime against Richard by which the bond of freely accepted rule once broken, the seeds of disorder and suspicion are sown to work themselves out on both sides in mutual destruction. The combatants in either camp at Shrewsbury invoke 'honour' and other lofty sanctions to justify their cause; but the reality is that crime born of self-interest on either side has born fruit in unnecessary bloodshed.

Shakespeare's treatment of the rebel leaders is designed to drive home these points as they reveal themselves in the details of character expressed in action. If their handling of the campaign is futile and their motives based on an unhappy mixture of fear and self-seeking the divisions that make their common action impossible spring from the dubious foundations of a cause conceived in egoism and executed without conviction. Of their moral and intellectual qualities we are left in no doubt. Glendower is a mixture of superstition, vanity and incompetence whose self-regard prompts him to look everywhere for insults and makes it impossible for him to collaborate honestly with his fellow-conspirators; Douglas is as the Prince has described him, a brainless butcher as contemptuous of the reasoning of others as he is himself incapable of rational thought. Throughout the rebel camp before the battle there exists the familiar division between the counsels of reason, which cannot see beyond timidity and selfish fear, and those of passion which drive those possessed by them to actions which cannot be justified upon the slightest reflection. Reason prompts Northumberland and Glendower to withhold their forces in order not to commit themselves to the common cause at the decisive moment, just as it has caused Vernon and Worcester to conceal the King's offer of peace; passion drives Hotspur and Douglas to accept battle against better advice on hopeless terms and to despise the reasonable counsels of strategy as inspired by 'fear and cold heart'. In this world of political sordidness and folly Hotspur stands out

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as a figure relatively attractive. That he is not without a critical eye is proved by his understanding of the nature of Glendower (III, i) and by his incisive description of the courtly popinjay who brought him the King's demand for his prisoners after his victory at Holmeden (I, iii). In both cases the justice of his comment is reflected in a vivid vernacular phrasing that guarantees its genuineness. Yet, in spite of these qualities, Hotspur remains a rebel and time shows him to be the instrument of politicians more calculating than himself. A warrior and man of action, the cause for which he fights is one whose moral basis cannot be reasonably sustained; so that his motives, far from being adequate, reduce themselves to an acceptance of the rhetorical idea of honour which prompts him, whenever it is mentioned, to emotional outbursts which contrast completely with Worcester's tight-lipped calls to reason and calculation. We are reminded of the Trojans in *Troilus and Cressida* with their facile surrenders to emotion leading to the acceptance of a cause indefensible in reason. At Shrewsbury Hotspur falls on behalf of policies less creditable than those his own nature should have been capable of accepting. His death leaves us with a sensation somewhere between the tragic and the ironic, adequately summed up in the contrasted attitude contained in his conqueror's brief words—'For *worms, brave* Percy' (V, iv). It is simply one aspect of the futility which is the real meaning of the battle of Shrewsbury, in which the rebels fail to achieve their end and at the same time prevent the King from obtaining the unity for which he is *now*, but too late, genuinely striving.

So far we might call the First Part of *Henry IV* an acute political study based on a personal elaboration of ideas rooted in traditional thought. But Shakespeare's most individual contribution to his material lies in the figure of Falstaff. Falstaff is given in the play a position of peculiar significance which enables him to transcend the political action in which he moves and to provide a sufficient comment on it. He serves, in a sense, as a connecting-link between two worlds, the tavern world of comic incident and broad humanity in which he is at home and the world of court rhetoric and political intrigue to which he also has access. So situated in two worlds and limited by neither, Shakespeare uses him as a commentator who passes judgment on the events represented in the play in the light of his own superabundant comic vitality. Working sometimes through open comment, sometimes even through open parody, his is a voice that lies outside the prevailing political spirit of the play, that draws its cogency from the author's own insight expressing itself in a flow of comic vitality. He represents, we might say, all the humanity which it seems that the politician bent on the attainment of success must necessarily exclude. That humanity, as it manifests itself in the tavern scenes, is full of obvious and gross imperfections; but the Falstaff of the play, whilst he shares these imperfections, is not altogether limited by them. His keen intelligence, his real human understanding, his refusal to be fobbed off by empty or hypocritical phrases—all

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these are characteristics that enable him to transcend his world and to become the individual expression of the conscience of a great and completely serious artist. In the elaboration of this point we approach the very heart of Shakespeare's conception in this play.

The true nature of Falstaff becomes most apparent when we realize that he comes to be in this series of plays a complete and significant contrast to the figure of the Prince. The full force of this contrast probably only became apparent to Shakespeare as he proceeded with his trilogy; but something of it is present from the first. It becomes fully clear for the first time in the scene of tavern parody when the two men caricature the relationship of Henry IV and his son (II, iv). Falstaff's behaviour after ascending his mock throne at Eastcheap in a scene which parodies by anticipation the real one shortly to take place (III, ii) envelops that relationship at once in the atmosphere of the popular stage, of the 'harlotry players', to use the Hostess' own words, and provides us with a new standpoint from which to consider the central political theme. The description he gives of the Prince, using his father's supposed words, is in itself a criticism, realistic and sardonic, of the whole family: 'That thou art my son, I have partly thy mother's word, partly my own opinion, but chiefly a villanous trick of thine eye, and a foolish hanging of thy nether lip, that doth warrant me'. It is not thus that Henry does actually speak to his son, nor is it true to say that the relationship between them is of this kind. That relationship is on the contrary truly tragic, and becomes more so as the father grows older and more conscious of the weariness that besets him through life; but the disillusioned clarity, even the coarseness, of Falstaff's description corresponds to something really present, that makes itself felt time and again in the Prince's attitude towards his life in the taverns and is a symptom of the detached inhumanity which is one ingredient of his political sense. This is not the Prince as he is, but it is one true aspect of him as seen by an eye clear and unfailing in its realism in the world in which this aspect is most in evidence. To bring out that aspect in those who surround him is the first of Falstaff's functions in the play.

The second is to provide on the basis of this clarity of vision a criticism of the whole political action, both on the loyalist and rebel side, which leads up to the dubious battle in which it concludes. In this action, and especially in its warlike phases, Falstaff is involved without being of it or subdued to the spirit, now cynical, now wordily 'honourable', in which it is habitually conceived. His comments on the motives of the rebels are characteristically clear-headed; his reaction to Worcester's disclaimer of responsibility for the rising is summed up in the phrase 'Rebellion lay in his way, and he found it' (V, i). More revealing still, because based on sentiments more deeply human beneath the comic vision, is his attitude towards the pressed troops placed under his command to lead into battle. He has, as always, no particular illusion about the nature and the origins of this human material, 'the cankers of a calm world and a long peace' (IV, ii); but his very account of

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them in the same speech as 'discarded unjust serving-men, younger sons to younger brothers, revolted tapsters, and ostlers trade-fallen', together with many other references, implies an awareness of social issues possessed by no other character in the play. This awareness is based in its turn upon Falstaff's outstanding quality, the capacity for human sympathy which marks him out in a world of calculation and inspires the respect for human life implied in his magnificent ironic reply to the Prince when the latter sums up his contingent as so many 'pitiful rascals'—'Tut, tut; good enough to toss; food for powder, food for powder; they'll fill a pit as well as better; tush, man, mortal men, mortal men' (IV, ii). For the Prince as for all his world, soldiers are mere pawns, the wretched instruments of political calculation to be considered from the point of view of their possible efficiency in the tasks imposed upon them by their leaders; for Falstaff alone they are human victims, individuals exposed to the manipulations of discreditable interests, 'mortal men' and as such to be respected after detached and unsentimental scrutiny in the very sordidness of their tragedy. It is his sense of humanity in its weakness and its irreducibility that prompts Falstaff's behaviour in the battle. Precisely because he is so human himself in his very irony he has no desire to die, to pay the debt of death 'before his day' (V, i); and precisely because he can realize in others the human desire to survive which he feels so strongly in himself he is keenly aware that 'honour' in the mouths of politicians who have been brought to battle by a combination of past selfishness and present refusal to face their responsibilities is an empty word and a delusion. 'I like not such grinning honour as Sir Walter hath' (V, iii) is his final comment, at once human and dispassionate, on the waste implied in a battle based on causes so suspect; and inspired by its spirit he moves through the conflict without being subdued to its tone, viewing it and himself with characteristic frankness and dominating it, when all is said and done, by the very force of his vitality.

These observations bring us to a third characteristic of Falstaff, the one which is perhaps the ultimate source of his strength and the key to Shakespeare's deepest conception in this play. There is in Falstaff a true and rare combination of the warm, alert humanity we have already noted with a background, sometimes accepted and sometimes rebelled against, but continually present, of inherited Christian tradition. It is reasonable to suppose that the latter element makes itself felt in a spontaneous acceptance of the inheritance, still not so distant from Shakespeare, of the mediaeval religious theatre. We may sense the presence of this inheritance in the readiness with which Falstaff in his phrasing draws upon images and ideas which derive their force from their relation to crucial moments in the familiar Christian drama. When he calls upon his tavern companions to 'watch to-night, pray to-morrow' (II, iv) the effect of the phrase depends largely upon its relation to the originally Christian ethic; when in the same scene he greets the news of the arrival of the King's messenger with

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'What doth gravity out of his bed at midnight?' it is not fanciful to seek in 'gravity' a personification of the kind familiar in the bearded, solemn figures of the old morality plays. Falstaff's utterances, indeed, are steeped in tradition, at once religious and theatrical, of this kind. He shares with his audience a whole world of imagery, drawn upon in such phrases as that in which his troops are described as 'slaves as ragged as Lazarus in the painted cloth, where the glutton's dogs licked his sores' (IV, ii). This common inheritance itself gives him reality by contrast with the orators and politicians of the verse scenes of this play. The ease with which he passes from the theatrical to the religious reference is never more clearly shown than in his comments on Bardolph's nose (III, iii). After a reference to the play of Beaumont and Fletcher in 'the Knight of the Burning Lamp' we hear it referred to as 'a Death's head or a momento mori'—'I never see thy face but I think upon hell-fire and Dives that lived in purple'. In such phrases we feel what the strength of a still living popular tradition can do. Assimilated into his utterances it enables Falstaff to bring to his criticism of the political action around him a realism that, in its profounder moments, is neither self-regarding nor cynical, but that derives from a balanced view of man's destiny and in particular of the peculiar complexity of spiritual motives. At his best Falstaff, recognizing his own faults, gives them a taste of tragic significance by relating them to the familiar but profound spiritual drama of mankind worked out in the individual between birth and death, in mankind between the Creation and the Last Judgment: 'Thou knowest in the state of innocency Adam fell; and what should poor Jack Falstaff do in the days of villainy? Thou seest I have more flesh than another man, and therefore more frailty' (III, iii). To take this too seriously would be as naïve as it would be short-sighted to deny it all seriousness. Falstaff's tone is in part ironical, mocking as usual; but the reference to the physical flesh here is subsidiary to the spiritual meaning of the word sanctioned by Christian theology, and it is in the sense of the relationship between the two, a relationship comprehending dependence and separation in a single unity, that Falstaff acquires his full stature. Such were the advantages for Shakespeare of inheriting—I say inheriting because the question of personal belief need not arise—a set of spiritual conceptions at once simple enough to be popular and sufficiently profound to cover the wealth of human experience. We need not say—should not say—that Falstaff simply accepts the Christian tradition. Part of him, what we may call the flesh, clearly does not; but the tradition is there, alive in his utterances and giving him even in his refusal to conform a vitality that enables him to dominate the play. We shall see this Christian background deepened and developed in the Second Part of the play.

D. A. TRAVERSI.

[An examination of *Henry IV, Part II*, will appear in the next issue of *Scrutiny*].

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MARIVAUX

COMTESSE :

Supportez donc mon ignorance; je ne savais pas la différence qu'il y avait entre *connaître* et *sentir*.

LELIO :

Sentir, madame, c'est le style du coeur.

(*La Fausse suivante*).

I.

ON 4th February, 1743, M. de Marivaux, the celebrated dramatist, took his seat in the French Academy in place of M. l'Abbé de Houtteville, the learned author of *de la Religion prouvée par les faits* to which the new academician paid a generous tribute in his *discours de réception*.

The election had been a curious one in several ways. Marivaux's defeated rival was none other than Voltaire. The two men had never got on well and the literary history of the period records a number of amusing exchanges between them. 'C'est un homme qui passe sa vie à peser des oeufs de mouche dans des balances de toile d'arraignée', said Voltaire contemptuously of Marivaux's plays. 'M. de Voltaire', retorted Marivaux, 'est le premier homme du monde pour écrire ce que les autres ont pensé'.

Their rivalry on this occasion, however, was not purely personal. When they stood for the Academy, Marivaux was the candidate of the *bien pensants* and Voltaire of the anti-clerical party. It was certainly not one of the 'cleanest' elections and skilful manoeuvring led to the unanimous election of Marivaux.

Marivaux's orthodoxy was not in doubt, yet he may well have felt that it was too much of a good thing when he learnt that he was not merely to succeed to the chair of one clergyman but was to be welcomed by another. For the reply to the *discours de réception* was pronounced by the Lord Archbishop of Sens. The Academy could scarcely have made a worse choice. When Marivaux's candidature was first mooted, the Archbishop was one of the signatories of a document which declared that

> 'Notre métier est de travailler à la composition de la langue, et celui de M. de Marivaux est de travailler à la décomposer; nous ne lui refusons pas de l'esprit, mais nos emplois jurent l'un contre l'autre, et cette différence lui interdira toujours l'entrée de notre sanctuaire'.[1]

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[1] V. Gaston Deschamps, *Marivaux* (Les Grands Écrivains Français) Paris, 1897, p. 78.

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The Archbishop evidently did not relish the task of welcoming a 'profane' writer and it will hardly be maintained that his handling of the situation was remarkable for its tact.

> 'Although you have won the place which you have just occupied among us by a large number of works which the public has read with avidity, he said, it is not so much to them that you owe your election as to the esteem in which we hold your conduct, your kindheartedness, the pleasure of your company and, if I may say so, your amiability'.

It must have been strange for the distinguished writer to learn that he owed his election to being a 'good mixer' rather than a good writer, and the Archbishop's performance was certainly a very odd one. He might be an Archbishop, but he could not avoid all mention of the work of the man whom he was welcoming to the Academy.

> 'I am not sufficiently acquainted with your writings, he went on, to see in them all the things which people find amusing and interesting; but from the few that I glanced at, I saw at once that the reading of these agreeable novels little became the austere dignity of my calling and the purity of ideas prescribed by Religion. I was therefore reduced to informing myself from other people. I learnt that your works showed everywhere great fecundity of imagination, fire, *agrément*, and vivacity. I was even told that they were based on sound morality and that they showed that you are an enemy of vice'.

Surely, one cannot help saying, surely the good man might have remembered that if the ecclesiastical politicians had not done their work so well, he might have found himself welcoming the author of the *Lettres philosophiques*. Not a bit of it. He had to admit at any rate to 'glancing at' some of these unseemly works and he was not going to sit down without administering some wholesome counsel.

> 'They also tell me, he continued, that in the course of these works you often describe tender and passionate adventures; that while you attempt to combat licence, you depict it with tender and naïve colours so that the impression on the reader must be very different from the one you intended . . .
>
> La peinture trop naïve des faiblesses humaines, he concluded, raising a warning finger, est plus propre à réveiller la passion qu'à l'éteindre'.

Marivaux was a very good-natured man, but this was almost too much for him. It is said that it was only with the greatest difficulty that he prevented himself from protesting on the spot against the innuendoes of the Archbishop. His fellow Academicians displayed less restraint. In the eighteenth century, it was customary for the police to be represented at meetings of the Academy and the representative who attended on this occasion observed in the

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course of his report:

> 'Pour le discours de M. l'archevêque de Sens, il a assommé l'assemblée . . . mais les longs éclats de rire dont on a honoré sa mercuriale à M. de Marivaux sur son *Paysan parvenu* ont dû lui faire comprendre ce qu'on pense de lui. Rien de plus singulier ne s'est jamais passé à l'Académie'.[2]

Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux was born on 4th February, 1688. His father was a hard-headed Norman banker who was *directeur de la Monnaie* at Riom and later exercised a similar function at Limoges. He left his son an *honnête fortune* which made it unnecessary for him to work for his living. His father's financial friends tried to persuade Marivaux to let them invest his money for him. He was not interested in money as such, but eventually agreed and his income was doubled. Almost at once the Law bankruptcy occurred and Marivaux found himself practically penniless.

This was in 1722. Shortly before he had married a *demoiselle aimable et vertueuse* whom he 'loved with all his heart'. His wife died the year following the financial débâcle, leaving Marivaux with a baby daughter. As she could not hope for a *dot*, she was destined from the first for the religious life; but even this might have fallen through on account of her father's poverty had not the Duke of Orléans stepped in and paid the *frais* when she took her vows.

'Ah! Sainte paresse! salutaire indolence!' wrote Marivaux in a letter to a friend towards the end of his life. His life was that of a typical eighteenth-century man-of-letters. When he was a well-to-do young man, he had only written when he felt like it; but the loss of his fortune meant that he became overnight a professional writer. His early works had not been impressive and it was only when he had to write for money that he emerged as the leading dramatist and novelist of the day, a famous wit, and the author of a number of miscellaneous works which still retain something of their original sparkle as we turn over the faded pages of those ample eighteenth-century volumes.

His election to the Academy marks the summit of his fame. He had already written his greatest dramatic work and his most famous novel, whose publication was spread over sixteen years, was nearing completion. He is one of the most delightful of French writers, but you only need a nodding acquaintance with his work to see that this man was not one of those writers who command success. He was for many years a popular and even prosperous author, but in his old age his readers and audiences began to fall away. He was granted a royal pension, but the discovery that he owed it to the good offices of Mme de Pompadour is said to have hastened his end. He died on 12th February, 1763, in his seventy-sixth year.

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[2]Deschamps, *Op. cit.*, pp. 80-1.

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II.

'In spite of the word *marivaudage*', said Larroumet, 'when we make a list of the four or five great writers who are the glory of the French theatre, Marivaux's name occurs at once and almost involuntarily to the mind. His place is immediately after Corneille, Racine and Molière'.[3]

Sixty-five years have passed since these words were written, but time has confirmed Larroumet's judgment. In his own country, Marivaux is regarded by many good critics as the fourth French dramatist. He occupies an honourable place in the repertoire of the Comédie Française; and those who are fortunate enough to be in Paris this autumn[4] may see M. Jean-Louis Barrault, one of the most distinguished living actors, play alternately in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Marivaux's *Fausses confidences*. Outside France, he is virtually an *auteur inconnu* whose works are at present difficult to obtain. Nor is this altogether surprising. He is the natural heir of Racine and though he is essentially a comic writer, his plays present something of the same difficulty for foreigners as Racine's. For he too dwells in what M. Mauriac calls 'that borderland between the head and the heart'. He creates, as surely as Racine, a world of his own. We are far from the solid, four-square world of Molière which has always endeared him to Anglo-Saxon audiences. The drama takes place in the same rarefied, slightly remote world as Racine's tragedies; and in spite of its grace and its poetry, it has the same intangibility. We do not know what his characters looked liked or what sort of clothes they wore; we experience the greatest difficulty in distinguishing between the Silvias, Dorantes, Lisettes and Arlequins who turn up in almost every play; the interest is concentrated on the drama going on inside the mind; and the lover of Marivaux like the lover of Racine is fascinated by the skill with which the characters' motives are unravelled.

The differences between Marivaux and Molière are nowhere more apparent than in their *suivantes*:

TARTUFFE:

Couvrez ce sein que je ne saurais voir;
Par de pareils objets les âmes sont blessées,
Et cela fait venir de coupables pensées.

DORINE:

Vous êtes donc bien tendre à la tentation,
Et la chair sur vos sens fait grande impression?
Certes, je ne sais pas quelle chaleur vous monte;
Mais à convoiter, moi, je ne suis pas si prompte,
Et je vous verrais nu du haut jusques en bas,
Que toute votre peau ne me tenterait pas. (*Tartuffe*).

* * *

[3] *Marivaux, sa vie et ses oeuvres*, Paris, 1882, p. 564.
[4] Written in October, 1947.

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LISETTE :

On dit que votre futur est un des plus honnêtes hommes du monde; qu'il est bien fait, aimable, de bonne mine; qu'on ne peut pas avoir plus d'esprit; qu'on ne saurait être d'un meilleur caractère; que voulez-vous de plus? Peut-on se figurer de mariage plus doux, d'union plus délicieuse?

SILVIA :

Délicieuse! que tu est folle, avec tes expressions.

LISETTE :

Ma foi, madame, c'est qu'il est heureux qu'un amant de cette espèce-là veuille se marier dans les formes; il n'y a presque point de fille, s'il lui faisait la cour, qui ne fût en danger de l'épouser sans cérémonie. Aimable, bien fait, voilà de quoi vivre pour l'amour; sociable et spirituel, voilà pour l'entretien de la société. Pardi! tout en sera bon, dans cet homme-là; l'utile et l'agréable, tout s'y trouve.

(*Le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard*).

Marivaux's servants like Molière's have a sturdy common sense, but Molière's also possess an earthiness and a simplicity that we shall not find in Marivaux's. His Lisettes have been purged of their homeliness; they are not really less witty or less intelligent than their employers and nearly all of them are capable of deputising for their mistresses as Lisette does in *le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard*.[5] The contrast between the two passages illustrates very well some of the principal differences between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The passage from *le Jeu de l'amour* possesses already that almost excessive refinement which belongs characteristically to the eighteenth century in France; the toughness, which is always present in seventeenth-century prose, however polished it may appear on the surface, has disappeared. Where Dorine refers bluntly to 'flesh', 'nakedness' and 'temptation', suggesting a society solidly based on a moral code, Lisette speaks with a hint of licentiousness of *épouser sans cérémonie* and at once evokes the moral obstacle race. 'Marivaux', said Sainte-Beuve, 'est celui qui cherche le plus à se rendre compte'.[6] *Doux, délicieuse, spirituel* and *agréable* are tell-tale words. The eighteenth century strikes a different note from the seventeenth. Its attention is carefully concentrated on minute distinctions between the different *sensations*. 'There is not a single case of adultery in the whole of his plays', said Deschamps. 'Il est le peintre des fiançailles merveilleuses. Il a

[5] 'Elles [the servants] sont bien les filles de ce siècle sociable —et plus égalitaire qu'on ne pense—où Mlle Delaunay, femme de chambre de la duchesse du Maine, était admise et recherchée aux soupers des marquises'. Deschamps, *Op. cit.*, p. 149.

[6] *Causeries du lundi*, IX, Paris, 1856, p. 275.

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écrit avec délices l'exquise préface du mariage d'inclination'.[7] No doubt he did, but an elegant *volupté* floats over these plays, permeating them like a perfume as surely as it does the *Liaisons dangereuses* and the paintings of Fragonard.

Another comparison from the same play throws further light on Marivaux and his age:

> Chaque jour à l'église il venait, d'un air si doux,
> Tout vis-à-vis de moi se mettre à deux genoux.
> Il attirait les yeux de l'assemblée entière
> Par l'ardeur dont au Ciel il poussait sa prière;
> Il faisait des soupirs, de grands élancements,
> Et baisait humblement la terre à tous moments;
> Et, lorsque je sortais, il me devançait vite
> Pour m'aller à la porte offrir de l'eau bénite . . .
> Je lui faisais des dons; mais, avec modestie,
> Il me voulait toujours en rendre une partie.
> 'C'est trop me disait-il, c'est trop de la moitié;
> Je ne mérite pas de vous faire pitié'.
> Et quand je refusais de le vouloir reprendre,
> Aux pauvres, à mes yeux, il allait le répandre . . .
> Un rien presque suffit pour le scandaliser,
> Jusqu-là qu'il se vint l'autre jour accuser
> D'avoir pris une puce en faisant sa prière,
> Et de l'avoir tuée avec trop de colère.
>
> * * *
>
> N'est-on pas content de Léandre quand on le voit? Eh bien, chez lui, c'est un homme qui ne dit mot, qui ne rit ni qui ne gronde; c'est une âme glacée, solitaire, inaccessible. Sa femme ne la connaît point; n'a point de commerce avec elle; elle n'est mariée qu'avec une figure qui sort d'un cabinet, qui vient à table et qui fait expirer de langueur, de froid et d'ennui, tout ce qui l'environne. N'est-ce pas là un mari bien amusant?

The first passage is taken from Orgon's account of his original meeting with Tartuffe; the second is an incidental portrait of a 'character' who never appears in the play at all. The function of the first passage is plain. It is Tartuffe as he has fixed himself in the mind of the credulous, neurotic Orgon and the play depends very largely on the contrast between the ragged, indigent *dévot* of Orgon's imagination and the real scoundrel whom he takes into his home. Marivaux's plays contain many thumbnail sketches and they appear at first to be mere exercises in virtuosity. In reality, they correspond to a psychological need on the part of the dramatist. Although the portrait of Tartuffe, with its brilliantly funny ending, is richly ironical in intention, it is the description of a real person whose gestures have been carefully observed. It is psychology *in action*. The *air doux* makes the whole congregation turn round

[7] *Op. cit.*, p. 186.

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and look; the pretended *ardeur* makes Tartuffe 'kneel on both knees', 'sigh', 'kiss the ground', 'offer holy water'. The portrait of Léandre is not realistic at all; it bears an unmistakable resemblance to a 'character' from the pages of one of the seventeenth-century moralists. It is an animated cartoon which goes jerkily through the motions of entering and leaving a room or arriving at table, and it is used to illustrate the writer's discourse. No one can be insensible to the felicity—perhaps the too obvious felicity—of *glacée, solitaire, inaccessible*; but their very felicity conceals the writer's purpose. The 'portraits' are really points of rest in Marivaux's plays. The normal tempo of the plays—the tempo of 'real life'—is slowed down; the writer switches from his characters to psychological constructions because he feels the need to stop 'life', to put human nature on the dissecting table and take it to pieces to see how it works. Marivaux's three adjectives do not simply describe states of mind; they are *static* and their effect is reinforced by the three substantives: *langeur, froid, ennui*, so that instead of issuing in action, they spread a curious immobility over the scene like a 'still' in the middle of a film:

> ' . . . et qui fait *expirer* de langueur, de froid et d'ennui, tout ce qui l'environne'.

Their effectiveness is heightened by the briskness of Lisette's *répliques* where the emphasis is all on the rapid shift and change of feeling:

> 'Un *duo* de tendresse en décidera, comme à l'Opéra: Vous me voulez, je vous veux; vite un notaire! ou bien: M'aimez-vous? non; ni moi non plus; vite à cheval!'

The point I want to make is that Marivaux not only works much closer to the surface than Molière, but that his plays mark a movement away from the comedy of *character* to a comedy of *language*. He lives partly in the world of character and action, and partly in a world of words. In spite of his immense superiority—the contrast in language is decisive—he is nearer to Restoration comedy than he is to Molière, and he points the way to Beaumarchais. Beaumarchais was a highly talented writer, but the coarsening of sensibility and a certain emptiness that we find in his work are the inevitable outcome of the approach to experience adopted by Marivaux.

The raw material of the artist is the same in all ages, but the great writer always makes an independent approach to experience. He never looks at human nature from the same angle as his predecessors. The accent falls in a different place; different feelings or, better, different combinations of feelings are singled out for study. In Lawrence's words, he calls for a fresh effort of attention, and that is his strength The great writer is the man who imposes a fresh pattern on human experience; the writer of the second rank is the man who, without precisely changing human experience,

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introduces a series of variations into the existing pattern, and that is Marivaux's achievement.

The great drama of the seventeenth century was the conflict between 'reason' and 'passion'. The ideal of the century was not the triumph of one over the other, but what I have called in another place a regulated tug-of-war;[8] and it is this precarious balance between the two which gives the work of the seventeenth-century masters its vitality and its tension. As the years pass, however, we cannot help noticing that 'reason' is fighting a losing battle. When we reach the end of the century, we find that not only Molière and Racine but Corneille, the great champion of 'duty', have deliberately jettisoned 'reason'.

La raison n'est pas ce qui règle l'amour,

declares Molière's Misanthrope.

Tant de raisonnements offensent ma colère,

cries Hermione.

When we come to Marivaux, the battle is virtually over. One of his characters observes:

> 'Oh! pour la raison, je ne m'en mêle point; les filles de mon âge n'ont point de commerce avec elle'.

For reason no longer even has the power to provoke anger. The dismissal of Hortensius, the pedant who, in the *Seconde surprise de l'amour*, tries to convince the unruly lover that 'la raison doit être notre règle dans tous les états', is a symbolical act. Reason is taken to the door and unceremoniously thrown out, leaving the characters to explore unhindered the world of sensation, to wander in what Sainte-Beuve called 'le gracieux labyrinthe de la vanité féminine'.[9]

> 'La grande route classique est devenue banale', writes M. Daniel Mornet, 'mais il reste les "sentiers du coeur", toutes les délicatesses subtiles par où l'amour, à travers tous les obstacles de la vie, ruse avec lui-même et avec les autres'.[10]

Marivaux's plays have been described as a conflict between *l'amour* and *l'amour-propre*. The label is as good as any other, but we must be clear about the meaning of *amour-propre*. All his characters belong to a stable, or apparently stable society, but its stability depends on a number of rules. *Amour-propre* is a defence-mechanism. The stability of society can only be preserved if people accept certain conventions, if they respect class-distinctions, financial interests and the *bien séances*. The danger of these con-

[8] *The Classical Moment*, London, 1947, p. 15.
[9] *Op. cit.*, p. 303.
[10] *Histoire de la littérature et de la pensée françaises*, Paris, 1927, p. 127.

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ventions is that they tend to stifle the real person beneath the social man, to substitute conventional feelings for natural reactions.

On the surface, nearly all the plays appear to be 'comedies of errors', and some of his critics were complaining in his life-time that the subject of every play is the same—the *surprise de l'amour*, the discovery by two people that, unknown to themselves, they are in love with one another. This criticism seems to me to be one-sided and to obscure Marivaux's very real originality. Within his limits he is an acute psychologist and it is his psychological insight which has made him so justly admired by his own countrymen. Each of the plays is a drama of discovery, a stripping away of those subterfuges and conventions which are collectively described as *l'amour-propre* until the real person is revealed to himself. All the characters are engaged in a psychological obstacle race; by clinging to a conventional security, by repeating catch-phrases, they run the risk of missing their chance of happiness, of marrying the wrong person or losing the right one. A thinks he is in love with B, C thinks he is in love with D; but in the end they discover that A is really in love with D, C with B. In another play A and B think that they are incapable of loving anyone, only to find out that they are in love with one another all the time. In still another play, A and B begin by hating or imagining that they hate one another, but as their conventional feelings are analysed and displayed, they gradually fall in love.

Without exception, they start off on the wrong track, pursuing the chimera of conventional happiness through the observation of the accepted distinctions of class and fortune, by accepting a ready-made conception of the way in which their own feelings work. In *l'Heureux stratagème*, a character remarks:

> 'Dans le fond, je le distinguais, voilà tout; et distinguer un homme, ce n'est pas encore l'aimer, Lisette; cela peut y conduire, mais cela n'y est pas'.

Distinguer is the catch-word which obscures the woman's real feelings from herself.

The dilemma is even more clearly analysed in the *Seconde surprise de l'amour*:

> 'Assurément, ce n'est pas que je me soucie de ce qu'on appelle la gloire d'une femme, gloire sotte, ridicule, mais reçue, mais établie, qu'il faut soutenir, et qui nous pare; les hommes pensent comme cela, il faut penser comme les hommes, ou ne vivre pas avec eux. Où en suis-je donc, si le chevalier n'est point jaloux? L'est-il? ne l'est-il point? on n'en sait rien, c'est un peut-être; mais cette gloire en souffre, toute sotte qu'elle est, et me voilà dans la triste nécessité d'être aimée d'un homme qui me déplaît'.

It is an admirable example of Marivaux's method. The Marquise knows that *gloire*, which is something very different from the seventeenth-century 'glory', is 'stupid', 'ridiculous', but it is

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'accepted', 'established', and must therefore be maintained in spite of the fact that it leads to a distortion of her true feelings.

The conflict may be a comic one, but it is also a genuine one. In the interests or supposed interests of their security and peace of mind, the characters cling desperately to conventional modes of feeling and a brief exchange in the *Fausses confidences* touches the core of the problem—the profound resistance to new experience:

DORANTE:

Araminte m'a dit que je lui étais insupportable.

DU BOIS:

Elle a raison. Voulez-vous qu'elle soit de bonne humeur avec un homme qu'il faut qu'elle aime en dépit d'elle?

For all Marivaux's characters fall in love *en dépit d'eux*. The emotional problem is only resolved by a series of ruses—the 'stratagems', 'inconstancies', 'false confidences', 'games' and 'chances' that give the plays their titles—which reveal them to themselves and to one another. They are suddenly overtaken by a *surprise d'amour* or a *joie imprévue* which makes them realize what they are and where their happiness lies:

ARAMINTE:

Vous donner mon portrait! songez-vous que ce serait avouer que je vous aime?

DORANTE:

Que vous m'aimez, Madame! Quelle idée! qui pourrait se l'imaginer?

ARAMINTE *d'un ton vif*:

Et voilà pourtant ce qui m'arrive.

At the climax of *la Double inconstance*, one of the characters declares:

'C'est que mon amitié est aussi loin que la vôtre; elle est partie: voilà que je vous aime, cela est décidé, et je n'y comprends rien. Ouf!'

The final act of the drama is the collapse of all conventions which takes the characters' breath away:

'Fierté, raison et richesse, il faudra que tout se rende. Quand l'amour parle, il est le maître, et il parlera'.

'I love you', they all say; 'I don't understand the first thing about it, but there it is. Ouf!'

Marivaux's strength and weakness are most apparent in *le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard* which is certainly his finest play. Although love is the subject of all his plays, it is not a powerful and dangerous emotion which continually threatens the balance of society as it had

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done in the previous century. It is an interesting state of mind, a very superior 'game', but a game that you cannot afford to lose. His characters are continually asking themselves not simply: 'What do I feel?' but 'How should I feel in this or that situation?' In other words, the drama does not arise from a clash between two contrary feelings, but from an absence of feeling, from a desire to escape from a *plein repos* which, though very different from the state that Pascal analysed so profoundly, is not less exasperating. Their dissatisfaction leads them to invent artificial situations which will provide them with new and interesting feelings, will enable them to 'see what it feels like'.

In *le Jeu de l'amour*, Silvia and Dorante decide, independently of one another, that it would be altogether too commonplace and uninteresting to meet, see whether they like one another and, if they do, get married. Instead, they hit on the idea of disguising themselves as their servants and their servants as themselves. After a great deal of fun and misunderstanding, the couple find that they like one another very well and marry.

The spectators like the parents are 'in the know', but it is a tribute to Marivaux as a psychologist that this does not detract from the very real dramatic force of the play. Silvia, imagining that she is going to meet Dorante without any disguise, describes her intentions:

> 'Franchement, je ne haïrais pas de lui plaire sous le personnage que je joue; je ne serais pas fâchée de subjuguer sa raison, de l'étourdir un peu sur la distance qu'il y aura de lui à moi. Si mes charmes font ce coup-là, ils me feront plaisir; je les estimerai. D'ailleurs, cela m'aiderait à démêler Dorante. A l'égard de son valet, je ne crains pas ses soupirs; ils n'oseront m'aborder; il y aura quelque chose dans ma physionomie qui inspirera plus de respect que d'amour à ce faquin-là'.

She is very sure of herself, very sure that she will only fall in love with some one of her own class. She is also very anxious to overthrow Dorante's defences, to 'subjugate reason' and undermine his *amour-propre* by making him fall in love with some one who appears to be no more than a servant. When she discovers that in spite of herself she is falling in love with some one whom she believes to be a servant, the conflict which is set up is a genuine one:

> 'Ah! que j'ai le coeur serré! Je ne sais ce qui se mêle à l'embarras où je me trouve; toute cette aventure m'afflige; je me défie de tous les visages; je ne suis contente de personne, je ne le suis pas de moi-même'.

A climax is reached when Dorante reveals himself. 'Ah!' cries Silvia. 'Ah! je vois clair dans mon coeur'.

There is immense relief behind her words. The artificial sentiments which she professed at the beginning of the play have vanished; she has undergone a transformation, has become a real

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person or what Marivaux calls a *sincère*. She knows now that she is in love and she knows, too, that the *bienséances* have been preserved. She not only speaks for all Marivaux's characters; she speaks for the age. For the clue to the age lies in the word *clair*. It reveals what may be described as the delayed influence of Descartes. When he wrote in the *Discours de la méthode* that the only things of which we can be certain are those of which we have 'clear and distinct ideas', he invested clarity with a fresh importance. The seventeenth-century masters were psychologists of the first order. They were able to concentrate on 'reason' and 'passion' and take 'clarity' for granted, and they left European literature a study of unsurpassed vividness of certain aspects of human nature. The concentration of the next age on 'clarity' reveals a shifting of the focus. It means that people are more concerned with knowing exactly what they feel than with the depth or richness of their feelings, that they are already conscious that emotional sterility is overtaking them.

Le Jeu de l'amour is written from the point of view of the woman. Indeed, if the term were not too strong for an art so suffused with *tendresse* as Marivaux's, one might feel inclined to say that he is on the woman's side in the 'sex-war'. Although Dorante gives himself away, Silvia resists the temptation to do the same herself. It is not a ruse to keep the play going for another two acts, but the result of her psychology.

SILVIA :

Ce qui lui en coûte à se déterminer ne me le rend que plus estimable. Il pense qu'il chagrinera son père en m'épousant; il croit trahir sa fortune et sa naissance. Voilà de grands sujets de réflexions; je serai charmée de triompher. Mais il faut que j'arrache ma victoire, et non pas qu'il me la donne; je veux un combat entre l'amour et la raison.

MARIO :

Et que la raison y périsse.

MONSIEUR ORGON :

C'est-à-dire que tu veux qu'il sente toute l'étendue de l'impertinence qu'il croira faire. Quelle insatiable vanité d'amour-propre!

MARIO :

Cela, c'est l'amour-propre d'une femme; et il est tout des plus unis.

One critic has described Silvia's continuation of the deception after Dorante has given himself away as 'a cruel game'. It is true that she shows the minx's determination to secure her triumph, but it is only part of the truth. Her attitude is no longer purely selfish and Marivaux showed himself a profounder psychologist than his critics. In the opening scene of the play she remarked :

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'Dans le mariage, on a plus souvent affaire à l'homme raisonnable qu'à l'aimable homme; en un mot, je ne lui demande qu'un bon caractère, et cela est plus difficile à trouver qu'on ne pense'.

She realizes now that her emphasis on *l'homme raisonnable* at the expense of *l'aimable homme* was a concession to *amour-propre*. She is very conscious that the 'game' has liberated her from conventional feelings and turned her into a real person—a person who prefers an 'amiable' to a 'reasonable' husband—and she knows that Dorante must make the same journey, that he too must free himself from the snares of convention by sacrificing not only *fortune* and *naissance*, but Reason itself. When she speaks of 'un combat entre l'amour et la raison', her voice is the voice of an age looking admiringly backward at the immense vitality of an earlier day which it tries in vain to recapture.

'Est-ce que nos coeurs ont de la raison?' asks a character in *les Sincères*. 'Il entre tant de caprices dans les inclinations'. The word *caprices* is another signpost. The great classics had explored certain feelings with such thoroughness that no further progress along the same lines was possible. It was left to Marivaux to investigate those by-paths which ran alongside the *grande route classique*. This explains why his work is a strange mixture of acute psychological insight and a special form of verbiage for which the French have coined the word *marivaudage*. 'When we speak of *marivaudage*', said Sainte-Beuve, 'we mean a sort of frigid badinage'.[11] This criticism seems to me to be a simplification, but it contains an element of truth. His badinage is not, as it is sometimes said to be, simply a playful verbiage written to entertain the audience. There is, to be sure, an element of preciosity which goes back to the *Précieuses ridicules*, but it is not the most important element. Marivaux was a penetrating psychologist, but he was working in a narrow field. This meant, inevitably, that he often pushed his analysis of feelings, his subtle distinctions between the different *caprices* of the human heart to the point at which they degenerated into a *jeu de mots*. The instrument is too elaborate for the material at its disposal. The feelings simply evaporate like delicate perfumes, but the analysis goes on; words take the place of the vanished feelings.

Now when a great writer—and Marivaux was undoubtedly a great comic writer—does this, it is a sign not of personal sterility, but of the sterility of the age. All Marivaux's characters are very pre-occupied—sometimes too pre-occupied—with the distinction between *connaître* and *sentir*. They realize that the *orages du coeur*, which had engaged the attention of their predecessors, were the sign and source of great emotional vitality; they realize that something has been lost. Their insistence on *sentir* springs from a scepticism—a well-founded scepticism—about their own capacity

[11] *Op. cit.*, p. 303.

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for feeling, and their elaborate 'stratagems' are deployed in the hope of recapturing what has been lost. Marivaux's method did enable him to make new discoveries about human nature; but the limitations imposed by the age and the disproportion between his instrument and his material sometimes leave us with the impression that he knew his field too well, that the human being has become a machine which an expert workman is taking to pieces and putting together again. It accounts too for a certain brittleness, a scarcely perceptible tension in his work. His characters are psychological tight-rope walkers who can never quite forget the precariousness of their poise, and the feeling communicates itself to the dramatist and his audience. For we are all haunted by the contrast between the brilliant surface and the sense of nothingness underneath; we all know that one false move would cause the collapse of the whole machine. That is why there have to be stoppages and sudden switches from the world of character and action to the world of words.

III.

'Racine by moonlight', said Lytton Strachey of Marivaux's plays, and the words describe very well the world of half-lights and half-tones, the *caprices* and the intricate *sentiers du coeur* of his plays. The world of the novels is very different. In the two best known of them—*la Vie de Marianne* and *le Paysan parvenu*—he gives a vivid, racy picture of life in eighteenth-century Paris. His flair for the portrait is turned to good account. The somewhat ghostly Dorantes, Silvias, Marquises and Comtesses of the plays are replaced by characters who are as carefully observed as those of the English novelists of the same period and whose feelings are subtler. He does not confine himself to the emotional complexities of the upper classes. His picture of society includes the nobility, the clergy, the bourgeoisie, merchants and servants who are very unlike the witty *suivantes* of the plays. There is one section of the community in which he displays a special interest. His *faux dévots* —M. de Climal, the Demoiselles Habert, Mme de Ferval and Mme de Fécour—are comparable to Molière's in *Tartuffe*. His irony may seem less fierce, but in its way it is not less damaging; and with his smug ecclesiastic, M. Doucin, who must have embarrassed the Archbishop of Sens, he ventures into places where Molière feared to tread.

The eighteenth century showed a curious interest in orphans, foundlings and abandoned children, and in this respect Marivaux is very much the product of his century. Marianne's parents were murdered by highway robbers when she was an infant; and though Jacob has a father, we never see him. He lives far away on his farm in Champagne while his son establishes himself as a *bourgeois de Paris* in the capital.

The appearance of the 'orphan' is a recurrence of the Cinderella myth, the story of the person who starting from nothing

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wins a fortune through the good offices of a fairy godmother and above all through good looks. Marivaux keeps close to the myth and in his novels the part of the 'good fairy godmother' is played by the 'benefactors' who take the orphans under their protection, that of the 'wicked fairy' by the people who try to break up their marriages. Now the Cinderella myth is the reverse of the 'outsider' myth of the nineteenth century, and the differences seem to me to be explained by differences in the structure of society. The background of Marivaux's novels as of his plays is a stable society. In spite of rogues, corrupt ecclesiastics and *faux dévots*, society is regarded as good in itself and Marivaux like Molière confines himself to criticisms of flaws in an otherwise reasonable order. The 'outsider' of the next two centuries is the man of superior abilities who cannot accept the conventions and subterfuges of a disintegrating society and becomes, as it were, a voluntary exile. The Cinderella story closes with the integration of the orphan in society; the outsider myth—represented by Stendhal in fiction and Rimbaud in life—closes with the abandonment of civilization and the death of the man who cannot fit in.[12]

There is no doubt that in deciding to write novels Marivaux intended to do something which he could not do in his plays. He certainly succeeded in covering a far wider field and in giving a picture of contemporary society which has a place of its own in eighteenth-century literature. In both *Marianne* and *le Paysan parvenu* his distinction as a writer is very much in evidence, but I think it must be admitted that he was not a novelist of the first order or even a great novelist at all. He was a very talented one. In his plays, one feels, the form he chose is an integral part of the achievement. His field was a restricted one and all the plays are variations on the same theme. They illuminate one corner of human nature, but the illumination is genuine and extends our knowledge of it. The novels display a greater width of life but less depth, and they do not possess the inevitability of the plays.

The novels are essentially psychological novels. Marivaux's elegance and sense of style are there certainly, but it is his power of psychological analysis to a greater extent even than his observation of the social scene which gives them their lasting value. Compared with the plays they are formless. He uses the convention of the story told in the first person and there is no particular reason why the books should ever come to an end. In a sense they never do. After a brilliant display of virtuosity in *Marianne*, Marivaux grew tired. The last four books are by another hand and only four of the eight books of the *Paysan parvenu* are by Marivaux. The novels were published piecemeal as the practice then was, and having embarked on the task Marivaux had to finish it, but he preferred to do so by proxy.

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[12] I have discussed this more fully in a study of Stendhal in *Horizon*, Nos. 90 and 91, July and August, 1947.

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Marianne and the *Paysan parvenu* are complementary studies. One tells the story of a girl who conquers a place in society by her charm and beauty and only discovers in the last chapter that she is of noble birth and has won by her own gifts what she was entitled to by birth. The other is the story of a bona-fide peasant who succeeds by good looks and sharp wits in marrying himself to a woman many years his senior it is true, but of good family and with a substantial *dot*, and thus obtains something to which conventional valuations did not entitle him.

> 'Marianne writing her memoirs, said Le Breton, is the soldier of fortune who has become emperor and is dictating his Memorial, revealing the secrets of his strategy and recalling his first victories—the victories of which he is prouder than of any of the others. Marianne has conquered and has reigned. Now that she is old and has abdicated, she likes to recall her triumphs and analyses with obvious satisfaction the wiles or the talents which enabled the little orphan that she once was to win the title of Countess. She is *the* woman of the eighteenth century, of the century in which woman was queen. She is desire and the art of pleasing incarnate'.[13]

Although the characters in the novels like those in the plays are born into a stable world, the problem which faces them is different. In the plays, the characters are already firmly rooted in society and their aim in both to conform to its code and to satisfy emotions which appear for one reason or another incompatible with it. In the novels, the drama is both internal and external. Marianne is, indeed, determined to conquer, to win a place *inside* society; but she can only do so by an internal adjustment. When the woman who has brought her up dies, she declares:

> ' . . . je n'ai de ma vie rien senti de si terrible; il me sembla que tout l'univers était un désert où j'allais rester seule . . . '.

The world can only cease to be a 'desert' if she succeeds in overcoming the social obstacles; and when she tries to do so by setting her cap at Valville she is told in no uncertain terms that

> 'La différence des conditions est une chose nécessaire dans la vie, et elle ne subsisterait plus, il n'y aurait plus d'ordre, si on permettait des unions aussi inégales que le serait la vôtre'.

The word 'order' has a certain positive content, but the thing for which it stands has become rigid and exclusive. The intrigues which let Cinderella in do have the effect of making the social order more comprehensive and more flexible. Her entry does not disrupt the life of the community as the 'outsider's' does in Stendhal's novels.

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[13] *Le Roman au dix-huitième siècle*, Paris, 1898, p. 73.

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Marianne's 'strategy' belongs very much to her century; it is the same that Mme de Merteuil will use a few years later with less modesty no doubt, but not with greater skill:

> ' . . . les hommes parlent de science et de philosophie; voilà quelque chose de beau en comparaison de bien placer un ruban, ou de décider de quelle couleur on le mettra! . . . '.
>
> 'Si on savait ce qui se passe dans la tête d'une coquette en pareil cas, combien son âme est déliée et pénétrante; si on voyait la finesse des jugements qu'elle fait sur les goûts qu'elle essaye, et puis qu'elle rebute, et puis qu'elle hésite de choisir, et qu'elle choisit enfin par pure lassitude . . . cela ferait peur, cela humilierait les plus forts esprits, et Aristote ne paraîtrait plus qu'un petit garçon . . . '.
>
> 'Quand je voulais avoir un air fripon, j'avais un maintien et une parure qui faisaient mon affaire; le lendemain on me trouvait avec des grâces tendres, ensuite j'étais une beauté modeste, sérieuse, nonchalante. Je fixais l'homme le plus volage; je dupais son inconstance, parce que tous les jours je lui renouvelais sa maîtresse; et c'était comme s'il en avait changé'.[14]

The very use of such methods stamps Marianne as a woman of her century. In attempting to become an 'insider', she inevitably conforms to the eighteenth-century ideal; she shares the contempt for 'reason' of the characters in the plays:

> 'Je pense, pour moi, qu'il n'y a que le sentiment qui nous puisse donner des nouvelles un peu sûres de nous, et qu'il ne faut pas trop se fier à celles que notre esprit veut faire à sa guise, car je le crois un grand visionnaire'.

We must, she is saying, see clearly into our hearts in order to act; but it is only by jettisoning reason and relying on feeling that we can make the right move.

Marivaux reveals something that we do not find in the seventeenth-century writers. His work is not a conflict between clearly defined, unchanging feelings which ends in victory for one set or another. He is very conscious of change, but of change *at the physiological level*:

> ' . . . l'âme s'accoutume à tout, *sa sensibilité s'use* et je me familiarisai avec mes espérances et avec mes inquiétudes . . . '.

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[14] *Cf.* 'Après le souper, tour à tour enfant et raisonnable, folâtre et sensible, quelquefois même libertine, je me plaisais à le considérer comme un sultan au milieu de son sérail, dont j'étais tour à tour les favorites différentes. En effet, ses hommages réitérés, quoique toujours reçus par la même femme, le furent par une maîtresse nouvelle'.

(*Les Liaisons dangereuses*, Lettre X).

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'. . . mais ce Valville ne m'a pas laissée pour toujours . . . *son coeur n'est pas usé pour moi*'.[15]

'Marianne', said Le Breton, 'est "une ingénue", mais une ingénue du siècle le moins naïf qui fût jamais'.[16] The charm of her century really depends on its innate sense of change, waste and decay, its determination to enjoy a life of refined sensation before sensation was 'used up'. The limitations of its philosophy are apparent in another passage:

> 'Oui, chère fille, je soutiens qu'un homme poli et aimable de coeur et de sentiments, quelque âgé qu'il soit, touche toujours notre âme, c'est d'abord par reconnaissance, ensuite par l'estime, de l'estime on passe à l'amitié, et de l'amitié à la tendresse. Tel est, ma chère fille, tel est le cercle qui enchaîne insensiblement un coeur malgré lui'.

We see clearly enough into the human heart, but we have no illusions about society which formed it. Life is limited to a certain round of feelings: *reconnaissance, estime, amitié, tendresse*. The novelist himself is caught in the same inexorable 'circle', the closed circle which imprisons his characters.

I think that we must conclude—this applies to *le Paysan parvenu* as well as to *la Vie de Marianne*—that the limitations of the age, which left their mark on the plays, are even more damaging to the novels. It is one of the signs of the lesser novelists that they give the impression of being too representative of their age instead of imposing themselves on it; and their characters always appear to be too completely the product of their environment instead of being endowed with the force which would enable them to resist or to change it. In spite of Marivaux's sensibility and his psychological acumen, the ideal of his characters is a flashy one and the 'order' into which they manage to integrate themselves seems meretricious.

'C'est le propre de chaque personnage de Marivaux', said Sainte-Beuve, 'd'être ainsi doublé d'un second lui-même qui le regarde et qui l'analyse'.[17] In *le Paysan parvenu*, Jacob is transformed overnight, without much regard for probability, from a country bumpkin into a *bourgeois de Paris* who possesses the same insight into human nature as Marianne and, indeed, as his creator. For when he declares

> 'Je m'en aperçois à merveille, et ce talent de lire dans l'esprit des gens, et de débrouiller leurs sentiments secrets, est un don que j'ai toujours eu, et qui m'a quelquefois bien servi'

—we know that it is the *second lui-même*, is Marivaux himself who is speaking.

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[15]Italics mine.
[16]*Op. cit.*, p. 76.
[17]*Op. cit.*, p. 275.

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I have said that the two books are complementary studies and in a sense this is true, but there are reservations to be made. Although Jacob plans his 'strategy' with the same care as Marianne and enjoys considerable success, his successes are not at the expense of women of his own age which would have been incompatible with Marivaux's immense admiration for the eighteenth-century *jeune fille*. His successes are confined to women who are very much older than he and who are also *dévotes*.

The description of the *dévotes* at home and at table is an excellent example not merely of Marivaux's irony, but of his power of evoking atmosphere which is something new in the novel:

> 'On eût dit que chaque chambre était un Oratoire; l'envie d'y faire Oraison y prenait en y entrant: tout y était modeste et luisant, tout y invitait l'âme à y goûter la douceur d'un saint recueillement . . .
>
> 'Jamais elles n'avaient d'appetit, du moins on ne voyait point celui qu'elles avaient: il escamotait les morceaux; ils disparaissaient, sans qu'il y parût presque y toucher.
>
> 'On voyait ces dames se servir négligemment de leurs fourchettes; à peine avaient-elles la force d'ouvrir la bouche: elles jettaient des regards indifférents sur ce bon vivre. Je n'ai point de goût aujourd'hui . . . Ni moi non plus . . . Je trouve tout fade . . . Et moi tout trop salé.
>
> 'Ensuite on ôtait le couvert; elles se laissaient aller dans un fauteuil, dont la mollesse et la profondeur invitaient au repos; et là on s'entretenait de quelques réflexions qu'on avait faites d'après de saintes lectures, ou bien d'un sermon du jour ou de la veille, dont elles trouvaient le sujet admirablement convenable pour Monsieur ou pour Madame une telle'.

This is how Jacob describes his wedding night with the middle-aged *dévote*:

> ' . . . c'est que jamais femme dévote n'usa avec tant de passion du privilège de marquer son chaste amour; je vis le moment qu'elle s'écrierait, quel plaisir de frustrer les droits du diable, et de pouvoir sans péché être aussi aisé que les pécheurs!'

In another passage the analysis of the relation between devotion and sexual pleasure is pushed a stage further:

> ' . . . les dévots n'aiment jamais tant Dieu que lorsqu'ils en ont obtenu leurs petites satisfactions temporelles; et jamais on ne prie mieux que quand l'esprit et la chair sont contents et prient ensemble; il n'y a que lorsque la chair languit, souffre et n'a pas son compte, et qu'il faut que l'esprit soit dévot tout seul, qu'on a de la peine'.

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He strikes a different note when he comes to the description of Mme de Ferval, the *fausse dévote* who almost becomes Jacob's mistress at the moment of his marriage to Mlle Habert:

> 'Elle avait des grâces naturelles. Par-dessus cela, elle était fausse dévote; et ces femmes-là, en fait d'amour, ont quelque chose de plus piquant que les autres: il y a dans leurs façons je ne sais quel mélange indéfinissable de mystère, de fourberie, d'avidité libertine et solitaire, et en même temps de retenue qui tente extrêmement. Vous sentez qu'elles voudraient jouir furtivement du plaisir de vous aimer, et d'être aimées sans que vous y prissiez garde, ou qu'elles voudraient du moins vous persuader que, de tout ce qui se passe, elles sont vos dupes, et non pas vos complices'.

'Voyez', writes Marivaux in another place,

> 'Voyez quelle école de mollesse, de volupté, et par conséquent de sentiment! car l'âme se raffine à mesure qu'elle se gâte'.

'Already, perhaps, in *la Vie de Marianne*', wrote Le Breton, 'one felt that the atmosphere was no longer healthy to breathe. What would it be like if we followed Jacob? Alas, when one loves Marivaux—and who can help loving him?—one can hardly resign oneself to seeing in his book what he himself put into it'.[18] Marivaux appears in the passages that I have quoted very much a man of the eighteenth century. *Le Paysan parvenu* is not, perhaps, the equal of *Marianne*, but its influence has been greater and it is a more characteristic product of its age. For I think that we must recognize that it is one of the first examples of 'the sex novel'. In describing the encounters between his characters, Marivaux deliberately exploits language; the scenes are intentionally 'suggestive'. It is this suggestiveness which is new. It is something that we do not find in the so-called 'erotic novels' of Crébillon *fils*.

Its influence does not end there. When he speaks of 'cette âme qui se tourne en bien plus de façons que nous n'avons de moyens pour les dire', we realize that the subtlety of his analysis did indeed reveal shades and nuances of feeling—particularly sexual feeling—in a way which had not been attempted before. The shifting of the emphasis from *reason* to *sentiment* also looks forward to Rousseau and the Romantics. For Marivaux is at one and the same time the intellectual and the man of feeling. His novels mark a parting of the ways in the sense that Laclos will make superhuman efforts to banish emotion altogether from his novel, to show us the rational man who devotes the whole of his intellectual powers to the cult of agreeable sensations; and Rousseau, while paying lip-service to virtue, will encourage his readers to abandon reason altogether and to seek the life which was excluded by the rationalists in *instinct*.

MARTIN TURNELL.

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[18] *Op. cit.*, p. 81.

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CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor,
Scrutiny,
Cambridge.

Sir,

In your issue of September last, which I have just received, Mr. Ronald Bottrall replies to Mr. Mason, who had made what to Mr. Bottrall (and I must say, to me also) seemed 'a very odd remark' to the effect that Mr. Bottrall should have appended, to a poem called *Freedom Lies in Adaptation*, a note stating either that the author had, or that he had not, read *Little Gidding*. Mr. Bottrall says: 'the lines were, in fact, drafted in the autumn of 1941 and finished in their final form in June/July, 1942'.

I should like to mention that *Little Gidding* was written in the latter part of 1942. It first appeared in *The New English Weekly* in October, 1942, and I had not shown the poem or any part of it to Mr. Bottrall before publication. Mr. Bottrall in June/July, 1942, was certainly unacquainted with any verse of mine later than *The Dry Salvages*. And I do not believe that he could have seen *The New English Weekly* in October of that year. In all probability he had no acquaintance with the poem until it was published separately by Faber & Faber. Perhaps I should, however, add a note to *Little Gidding* to say whether I had or had not read a draft of *Freedom Lies in Adaptation* before composing my poem.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

T. S. Eliot.

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

APPROACHES TO T. S. ELIOT

T. S. ELIOT: A STUDY OF HIS WRITINGS BY SEVERAL HANDS. Edited by B. Rajan (*Dennis Dobson*, 7/6).

Here, edited by a Fellow of Trinity, and contributed to by members of the Cambridge English Faculty and other respectable academics, is a volume of essays on T. S. Eliot, all treating him as a classic and an accepted glory of our language. As one contributor, Miss Bradbrook, indicates, such a thing was, not so very long

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ago, hardly conceivable; it means that a revolutionary change has been brought about. 'How was it done?' Miss Bradbrook doesn't answer her question; but, while she slights one main part of the answer, her essay seems to me to illustrate the other. Referring back to the Cambridge of the nineteen-twenties, she surmises (exemplifying a tone and an attitude characteristic of her essay—I find them, I had better say outright, very distasteful): '. . . Mr. Eliot may be relieved that the incense no longer fumes upon the local altars with quite its old intensity . . .'. I can only comment that a pronounced fume, strongly suggesting incense, rises from Miss Bradbrook's own essay, and that it is of such a quality as to give us half the answer to her question. (I find her style, which suggests the influence, not of Mr. Eliot, but of another Anglican intellectual and dramatist, Miss Sayers, corroborative).

For it is certain that a marked change in Mr. Eliot's standing followed the appearance of *For Lancelot Andrewes* and *Ash-Wednesday*, and that if so difficult and disturbing a poet is so generally accepted as an established institution it is for the kind of reason that makes a great many people (including, one gathers, Miss Bradbrook—see a footnote to p. 21) suppose that *The Rock* and *The Murder in the Cathedral* inaugurated a revival of religious poetic drama. The part played by Mr. Eliot's association with religious orthodoxy is to be read plainly in at least three of the eight essays presented by Dr. Rajan.

Yet Mr. Eliot would not have been there for Anglo-Catholic intellectuals as a triumphantly acclaimable major poet, the great living master, nor would the critical apparatus for confidently appraising and elucidating him as such, if there had not been, in the years referred to by Miss Bradbrook, admirers capable of something more critical than burning incense. And, I must add, capable of something in the nature of courage that isn't necessary to-day—an aspect of that forgotten situation not done justice to by Miss Bradbrook, who says:

> 'When *The Sacred Wood* and *Homage to John Dryden* appeared Mr. Eliot was still the subject of frightened abuse in the weeklies, and also in some academic circles. But his views percolated downwards, and are now almost common form. How was it done?'

That 'still' must appear very odd to anyone who recalls the chronology of Mr. Eliot's *œuvre*. *The Sacred Wood* came out in 1920 and *Homage to John Dryden* in 1924 (when in most academic circles Mr. Eliot's name would hardly have met with recognition). 'Still', I must testify, having the strongest of grounds for confident insistence, still in 1930 (and later), and in the academic circles that now receive Dr. Rajan's enterprise without a flutter, Mr. Eliot's mere name, however modestly mentioned, was as a red rag to a bull. I could tell Miss Bradbrook, privately, some piquant and true anecdotes in illustration. I will confine myself here to two

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reminiscences of sufficiently public fact. When in 1929 an innocent young editor printed an article of mine on Mr. Eliot's criticism in *The Cambridge Review* (a reply to a contemptuous dismissal of him by a Cambridge 'English' don in Mr. Desmond McCarthy's *Life and Letters*) he very soon had cause to realize that he had committed a scandalous impropriety, and I myself was left in no doubt as to the unforgivableness of my offence. And when, in 1932, a book of mine came out that made a study of Mr. Eliot the centre of an attempt to define the distinctive aspects of significant contemporary poetry, so much worse than imprudent was it found to be that the advanced academic intellectual of the day declined (or so the gloating whisper ran) to have anything to do with it, and *The Cambridge Review* could find no reviewer for it in Cambridge. I remember, too, with some amusement, the embarrassed notes I received from correct friends who felt that some form of congratulation on the appearance of a book had to be gone through, but knew also that the offence was rank, disastrous and unpardonable. Yet the matter of that offensive book is seen, in Dr. Rajan's symposium, to be now 'common form'. How was it done?

I have thought this note on the development of a literary-critical orthodoxy worth making, not only because history will go on repeating itself and, though it undoubtedly in any case will, there is always some point in insisting on the moral as presented by the nearest striking instance, but because such an orthodoxy naturally tends to discourage true respect for the genius it offers to exalt—to substitute, that is, deference. True respect is inseparable from the concern to see the object as in itself it really is, to insist on the necessary discriminations, and so to make the essential achievement, with the special life and virtue it embodies, effective as influence. Of this respect Miss Bradbrook seems to me to fail.

She is not, among Dr. Rajan's contributors, alone in that. I read her first because so much, largely repetitive, had already been written about Mr. Eliot's poetry, and the opportunity, I told myself, still lay open for a first-hand attempt to appraise the criticism. My disappointment is the heavier because such an appraisal seems to me very much to be desired. It would involve some firm discriminating and delimiting, and until these are performed, the ambiguity that hangs about the nature and tendency of Mr. Eliot's influence must impede the recognition of our debt. It is a debt that I recognize for myself as immense. By some accident (it must have been—I had not come on Mr. Eliot's name before) I bought *The Sacred Wood* just after it came out, in 1920. For the next few years I read it through several times a year, pencil in hand. I got from it, of course, orientations, particular illuminations, and critical ideas of general instrumental value. But if I had to characterize the nature of the debt briefly I should say that it was a matter of having had incisively demonstrated, for pattern and incitement, what the disinterested and effective application of intelligence to literature looks like, what is the nature of purity of interest, and what is meant by the principle (as Mr. Eliot himself

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states it) that 'when we are considering poetry we must consider it primarily as poetry and not as another thing'.

There are few pieces of his criticism after *For Lancelot Andrewes* to which one would send the student of literature for such demonstration. 'When he stabilized his own style as a poet, some informing power departed from his critical writing. If for example the essay on *In Memoriam* be compared with that on Massinger, or the introduction to the volume of Kipling's verse with the essay on Dryden, it will be seen that Mr. Eliot has withdrawn from his subjects: he is no longer so closely engaged . . . ' Ah, if that were all. It seems to me, in fact, that Miss Bradbrook's handling of the change isn't free from disingenuousness:

> 'Mr. Eliot has apologized for the "pontifical solemnity" of some of his early writings. Nervous stiffness and defensive irony were inevitable in an age when "a complete severance between his poetry and all beliefs" could be imputed to him for righteousness. The later criticism exhibits rather a haughty humility—"The poem *Gethsemane* (by Kipling) which I do not think I understand . . . "; the implication being, "I expect you think it's simple, but that only shows how superficial your reading is" '.

To find the difference between the earlier and the later criticism in the disappearance or diminution of nervousness—that is to me an extremely odd achievement. Mr. Eliot's best criticism is remarkable for its directness, its concentrated purity of interest, its intense and rigorous concern to convey the essential perception and the bearing of this as realized by the critic. It exhibits the reverse of hesitation and diffidence; its qualities are intimately related to courage. I don't find these qualities in the Kipling introduction referred to by Miss Bradbrook. On the contrary, in that too characteristic specimen of the later writing the critic seems to me to have misapplied his dangerous gift of subtle statement to the development of a manner (it is surprisingly suggestive in places of G. K. Chesterton) that gainsays the very purpose of criticism, and to have done so because of a radical uncertainty about his intention and its validity. And is what we have here (from *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*) 'haughty humility'?—

> 'Mr. Housman has given us an account of his own experience in writing poetry which is important evidence. Observation leads me to believe that different poets may compose in very different ways; my experience (for what it is worth) leads me to believe that Mr. Housman is recounting the authentic process of a real poet. "I have seldom" he says, "written poetry unless I was rather out of health". I believe that I understand that sentence. If I do, it is a guarantee—if any guarantee of that nature is wanted—of the quality of Mr. Housman's poetry'.

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It seems to me also that in Mr. Eliot's critical writing from *For Lancelot Andrewes* onwards a limitation that is (on a pondered appraisal) to be predicated of his earlier work asserts itself as a major weakness—a weakness of a kind that might seem to be disqualifying where claims to status as a great critic are in question. That the author of *Selected Essays* is (if not, where shall we find one?) a great critic I don't for a moment doubt. But if he is, it is in spite of lacking a qualification that, sketching the 'idea', one would have postulated as perhaps the prime essential in a great critic. It is a qualification possessed pre-eminently by D. H. Lawrence, though he, clearly, is not to be accounted anything like as important in literary criticism as T. S. Eliot: a sure rightness in what, if one holds any serious view of the relation between literature and life, must appear to be the most radical and important kind of judgment.

As Miss Bradbrook intimates, Mr. Eliot's best criticism was related in the closest of ways to his own problems as a poet—a practitioner who has rejected current conventions and modes as inadequate to his needs and so is committed to a labour of thorough-going technical innovation. Questions of technique—versification, convention, relation of diction to the spoken language, and so on—cannot be isolated from considerations of fundamental purpose, essential ethos, and quality of life. That is, one can hardly say where technical questions turn into questions that one wouldn't ordinarily call technical 'The important critic is the person who is absorbed in the present problems of art, and who wishes to bring the forces of the past to bear on the solution of these problems'. The attention that Mr. Eliot's highly selective kind of interest (the definition just quoted is his own) directs upon Donne, Marvell, Dryden, Jonson, Marlowe, and the others, entails value-judgments. But it doesn't commit him to attempting any comprehensive evaluation or definitive placing. So that, by way of countering one's protests that he over-rates Dryden, one can adduce the very special interest with which he approaches and the strictly limiting end he has in view—one can adduce these, I must add, while deploring both the over-valuation of Dryden that he has certainly helped to establish as a fashion, and the attendant slighting of the incomparably greater Pope (without an appreciation of whom there can't be any but the most incomplete perception of Mr. Eliot's seventeenth century—the seventeenth century of Jonson, Donne and Marvell).

But the major instance of the limiting approach, the instance where the limitation is most clearly seen to entail unfortunate consequences, is what we have in Mr. Eliot's treatment of Jacobean drama. No one, I think, admires more than I do his contribution in that field, or can be more grateful for it. To appreciate it one needs to have started reading the Jacobeans when the Lamb-Swinburne tradition was unchallenged, and no better critical equipment for dealing with poetic drama was to hand than that which has its classical exponent in Bradley. No doubt, had one

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been put on to them, one might have found a tip or two, here and there, in scholarly sources. But only a fine and powerful critical intelligence, informed with the insight got in dealing with its own creative problems, could have brought effective aid, and it was Mr. Eliot who brought it. He supplied the equipment of ideas about drama, the enlightenment about convention and verse, that made all the difference. What he did not, however, do, was to attempt any radical valuation of the Jacobeans. The very marked tendency of his work, in fact (in spite of his admirable asides on Beaumont and Fletcher), has been to endorse the traditional valuations. (It seems to me highly significant that he has gone on reprinting that very unsatisfactory essay on Middleton). What he hasn't done, no one else has had the courage or the perception to do. So that, though he insisted on the need to distinguish conventions from faults (see 'Four Elizabethan Dramatists'), scholars who, stimulated by him, have undertaken to investigate the conventions have tended to repeat, in inverted form, the failing he notes in Archer: that is, to make everything convention, thus emptying the term of its force. To have acted seriously on Mr. Eliot's tip, and taken proper cognizance of faults, would have been to face the need for drastic revision of some consecrated valuations.

Here, then, is an unfortunate consequence of the special restricted approach. But restricted approach and special interest are not the whole of the story—this is what we are made to realize when we come to the later criticism. When the critic's technical preoccupations cease to exercise a close direction over his criticism, he gives himself a great deal more to comprehensive and radical value-judgments, and it is then that we have to recognize a fundamental defect. I myself see it in the essay on Tourneur, where he makes what is to me an astonishing reference to Swift: 'We may think as we read Swift, "how loathsome human beings are"; in reading Tourneur we can only think "how horrible to loathe human beings so much as that" '. The phrase used here of Tourneur is precisely what I should have found fitting as applied to Swift. It was D. H. Lawrence who diagnosed Swift's case so well, and who was so quick to perceive, and sure in placing, the signs of such malady as Swift exhibits in that terribly extreme form. And it is Lawrence himself who, as subject, provides the capital instance of Mr. Eliot's defect as a great critic. (Mr. Eliot himself, in *After Strange Gods*, concedes enough to place the matter above the level of mere difference of judgment). 'Against the living death of modern material civilization he spoke again and again, and even if these dead could speak, what he said is unanswerable'. Lawrence stood for life, and shows, in his criticism, tossed off as it was, for the most part, in the most marginal way, an extraordinarily quick and sure sense for the difference between that which makes for life and that which makes against it. He exhibits a profound, and for those who come to the criticism knowing only the fiction, perhaps surprising, centrality.

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I myself think Lawrence sounder in judgment about the Joyce of *Work in Progress* than Mr. Eliot, whose ascription of importance to it doesn't seem to imply importance as representative disintegration-phenomenon. (That the inventor of Basic English should take a keen interest in the *Work* always seemed to me appropriate). However that may be, I am sure that so distinguished a mind as Mr. Eliot's ought not to have been able to take Wyndham Lewis so seriously, or find him so sympathetic. Then there is Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*: it deals, of course, with Evil—but surely Mr. Eliot's estimate of it will stand as one of the curiosities of literature. And to be able to refer favourably to Henry Miller—when I try to believe that some perversity of my imagination has invented this I recall, in detail, an unquestionable fact: the paragraph that finds promise for the future of English fiction in Lawrence Durrell's *Black Book*. The inspiration of these works, in so far as they have any, seems to me to be the desire, in Laurentian idiom, to 'do dirt' on life. And I have to record the conviction that the reaction against 'liberalism', or the world of William Clissold, represented by Mr. Eliot's critical writings is, at any rate largely, of the wrong kind. I put it naïvely no doubt, and I will go on to suggest that Lawrence's reaction against the same world (see his review in *Phoenix* of H. G. Wells and relate it to the *Fantasia of the Unconscious*) has much more of health and rightness in it.

In general where contemporary letters have been concerned Mr. Eliot's judgment has, it seems to me, been very much out—deflected by pulls and disturbances of various kinds. Yet in spite of this, and in spite of the radical nature of the major weakness that has been indicated, he remains a great critic. It is not only that he has re-orientated criticism and poetic practice, effecting a profound change in the operative current idea of the English tradition, and that in this achievement his critical writings have played an indispensable part. It is also that the best of those writings represent more powerfully and incisively the idea of literary criticism as a discipline—a special discipline of intelligence—than the work of any other critic in the language (or any in French that I know).

To this high distinction in criticism Miss Bradbrook's intentness on advancing unsustainable claims makes her incapable of doing justice. Thus she writes:

> 'His purely destructive work has sometimes been the result of some temperamental aversion. Milton has survived the attack of Mr. Eliot and the Battle of the Critics which it provoked. (Yet how strange that a taste for Landor should accompany a distaste for Milton)'.

The taste for Landor always seemed to me strange. I could explain it only as a minor snobbism—one that was peculiarly unfortunate when it led to Landor's being adduced in illustration of impersonality. Landor's impersonality is that of the stiff suit of style that

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stands up empty—impersonal because there is nothing there. For Miss Bradbrook, however, it is not the taste for Landor, but the critical attitude towards Milton that has to be deplored. Yet to talk in that way of an 'attack on Milton' ('purely destructive') that Milton has survived is to expose an inappreciation of what Miss Bradbrook admits to be Mr. Eliot's most vital criticism, to miss its force, and to deny the essence of that poetic achievement with which the criticism is so closely bound up. For poetry is made of words—words and rhythms, and 'sensibility alters from generation to generation in everyone . . . but expression is only altered by a man of genius'. It was the informing presence everywhere, in the criticism, of the practitioner's preoccupation with his problem of putting words together—of inventing the ways of using words, the rhythms, and the versification, demanded by his essential interests—that gave his brief asides on Milton their potency. Milton is indeed still there, an impressive figure (in spite of some of his defenders), but if you can't see what is meant by saying that he was a prepotent influence in taste and poetic practice until Mr. Eliot's work had its effect, and has since ceased to be, then you are not really appreciating Mr. Eliot's genius or its achievement. And you make no real restitution by coming with this kind of offering:

> 'But in general, Eliot's destructive criticism has also anticipated the more general verdict, even as in the poems *Triumphal March* and *Difficulties of a Statesman* (1932) he anticipated the spirit of Nazi Germany and the spirit of Munich with prophetic accuracy'.

It is because I admire those poems so immensely, and think they have not had due recognition, that I feel obliged to say that this account of them seems to me deplorable nonsense—or mere incense.

I have concentrated on Miss Bradbrook's essay because, while it offers a representative opportunity for underlining what, for the reader who has lived through the history of Mr. Eliot's reputation must be the significance and the moral, there was still, it seemed to me, something that needed to be said on the criticism. All the other essays are on the poetry. The best of these are by the two American contributors, Mr. Cleanth Brooks and Mr. Philip Wheelwright, together with those by Miss Gardner and Mr. Mankowitz. I was interested by Mr. Brooks' argument against my view that *The Waste Land* 'exhibits no progression' (and touched, I must confess, by his generous acknowledgments to that pioneer book, written nearly twenty years ago—which has been honoured with more pillaging than acknowledging). But it still remains to inquire whether the intention noted by Mr. Brooks (see pp. 129-30) is anything more: is it operative poetically, does it become something realized in the poem? This kind of question is, in general, not asked by the contributors to the symposium. They build on the antecedent work of criticism.

And this is the point at which to mention the general tendency

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in the literary-academic world to-day to substitute, the cue having been given, elucidation for criticism. Mr. Brooks's kind of elucidation has, I can see, a function, though I can also see dangers in it. The dangers are illustrated by that phrase 'death-in-life' and the part it plays in Mr. Brooks's exposition. By the grateful follower of the exposition such a phrase is readily taken as doing more than it does, while, in his sense of having grasped the 'meaning' of the poetry, he has grasped nothing but a phrase. At the risk of seeming egotistic I will say that, for unequivocal aid, one can't, I think, do much more than I tried to do in my own account of *The Waste Land*: commit oneself in clear and challenging terms to the necessary critical judgments, and indicate the nature of the essential organization.

It is when the elucidatory approach is Anglo-Catholic (or made from the point of view of doctrinal acceptance) that the dangers are greatest. They are apparent even in Miss Gardner's scrupulous and sensitive commentary on the *Four Quartets*. There is a clear tendency to frustrate the enormous labour expended by the poet in undercutting mere acceptance, inhibiting inert acquiescence, and circumventing, at every level, what may be called *cliché*; a tendency, that is, to abet the reader's desire to arrive without having travelled. And the separation from criticism is apparent in the references to *Family Reunion*.

Miss Gardner's essay, however, could for the right reader perform a useful function. But Mrs. Duncan Jones's commentary on *Ash-Wednesday* seems to me to do little but justify one's apprehensions about Anglo-Catholic elucidation. Starting with acceptance, it turns the poetry into something like illustrations of acceptances, poetical formulations of antecedently defined attitudes and beliefs. That is, it denies the poet's genius and deprives his poetry of its astonishing (and disturbing) life and its profound general interest and validity. She can say for instance of *Salutation* (as it was first called), a poem I intensely admire: 'The second poem ends on a note of absolute assurance and content'. To be able to say that of it you must, I am convinced, have missed something—something essential. And in general it is as if Mrs. Duncan Jones were saying what Dr. Rajan does actually say (p. 88): 'Mr. Eliot means what is meant by any Christian'.

Dr. Rajan does not, one gathers, himself write as an Anglo-Catholic. In fact, he intimates that he could, given room, correct Mr. Eliot authoritatively about Krishna. And one suspects that the qualification which enables him to do so may be attended with a disadvantage; for after all, the *Four Quartets* are extremely subtle and difficult, and demand for their critical appreciation not only good analytic powers, but as complete an inwardness with the English language as any poetry that was ever written. However that may be, in his essay we have the extreme instance of the divorce of elucidation from criticism. This divorce is not the less apparent for his offering a good deal in the guise of critical and appreciative comment. It is mostly of this kind:

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'The confidence of the poetry is superb. It disdains analogies. It will have nothing to do with snapshot imagery. The resonant pride of those polysyllables summons all fact to a defining judgment and then, as the sibilants slow its clash and recoil, the open vowels hush it to repose. Against that liberating assurance the verse speaks again melodious and human . . .'.

Surely this kind of commentary is sufficiently placed by Dr. Rajan himself when he says:

'Of the tremendous rhymed lyric of section four there is nothing I can say which would not be redundant. People to whom it is not immediately impressive are unlikely to be convinced by a description of its subtleties'.

When he does offer comments of a kind that can be checked as tests of sensibility they are usually of this kind:

'The "fiery rain" which falls here falls also on burning London. Here Mr. Eliot, fire-watcher and wanderer in Hades, meets his "familiar compound ghost" which will provide the backbone for one hundred American theses and which as far as present knowledge can tell is Dante, Mallarmé, and Arnaut Daniel together. The ghost promises Mr. Eliot a suitably grisly future, but all that he can say, however terrible, is turned into sweetness by Eliot's *terza rima* .

This passage in '*terza trma*' is the one about which D. W. Harding (reviewing *Little Gidding* in *Scrutiny*, XI, 3) says:

'The verse in this passage, with its regular measure and insistent alliteration, so effective for combining the macabre with the urbane and the dreary, is a way to indicate and a way to control the pressure of urgent misery and self-disgust. The motive power of this passage . . . is repulsion'.

I quote Harding by way of emphasizing that it is not just a case of *one* judgment against another. My response corroborates his account very forcibly, and it is a response that is contradicted violently by the description 'sweet'. I can only say that Dr. Rajan's account seems to me to betray a striking defect of sensibility. And I can't help associating that defect with the failure in tone and touch (characteristic, I think) represented by such phrases in the commentary as 'The ghost promises Mr. Eliot a suitably grisly future'.

Further, I do not think that Dr. Rajan could have permitted himself the indulgence of that easy superiority about 'one hundred American theses' (two of the best contributors to his symposium are by Americans) if he had been really responding to the quality of what was in front of him—it is the passage in which (in Harding's words) 'the humanist's ghost sees in his life . . . futility, isolation and guilt on account of his self-assertive prowess', and one would have thought it, for the reader exposed to it, destructive of all easy complacencies:

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' . . . the laceration
Of laughter at what ceases to amuse.
And last, the rending pain of re-enactment
Of all that you have done, and been; the shame
Of motives late revealed, and the awareness
Of things ill done and done to others' harm
Which once you took for exercise of virtue.
Then fools' approval stings, and honour stains.
From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit
Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire
Where you must move in measure, like a dancer'.

Almost always where Dr. Rajan commits himself to judgments which can be challenged he seems to me to confirm the suspected defect of sensibility.

His title is *The Unity of the Quartets*, but I cannot see that he adds anything to the extant accounts of the organization of that work. When, for instance, he says, 'What his scheme is I should hesitate to specify, beyond suggesting that *Burnt Norton* is concerned with constructing concepts' we can see that this is D. W. Harding's 'creation of concepts'. But Dr. Rajan, as he indeed intimates, does nothing to extend Harding's account, or to explain the borrowed phrase, or to justify in any way the (unacknowledged) borrowing. His presumptive intention of explaining organization doesn't sufficiently control his commentary, as the large proportion of this which is devoted to a kind of Sitwellian quasi-creative pseudo-analysis betrays. And too often, in the guise of analytic guidance we have such passages as this:

> 'The words in *Little Gidding* are points of intersection. They join, in the tolerance of a convening insight, the worlds which in common experience are divided and distinguished. Always they bring us back to what is known, but it is the familiar made different by exploration, the "intimate yet identifiable", the every day alchemized into abiding strangeness'.

Does this kind of gloss add anything to anyone's understanding or appreciation of the text? It is true that Dr. Rajan goes on to say:

> 'It is most difficult to do justice to *Little Gidding*. You have to do the impossible, to say four things at once; and if you try to say them successively you end up by saying something different'.

The moral is that you should be very clear with yourself as to precisely what function you are undertaking to perform. It will hardly be that of 'doing justice'—an aim which would most likely result in the commentator's producing (as Miss Bradbrook puts it) a 'debilitating rehash of what his author may be supposed to "mean" '. What *can* reasonably be undertaken is to point out the nature of the organization, and that task, it should be recognized,

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is one for a disciplined effort of intelligence. But it cannot be satisfactorily performed except by an analyst with a good sensibility. That is, it demands a critic, capable of first-hand response and independent judgment.

It must be said that Miss Anne Ridler, in her chosen mode of commentary, shows herself very much at home. She gives as her subject, 'A Question of Speech', and approaches it as herself an English poet. 'For myself, I should say, it was Eliot who first made me despair of becoming a poet; Auden (with, of course, dead poets, notably Sir Thomas Wyatt) who first made me think I saw how to become one'. She discusses (among other things) the relation between poetry and music, and thinks

> 'the differences more suggestive than the similarities. The elementary fact that poetry has no sustained notes is a big one; "duration in time" is therefore quite a different thing for her, and she cannot mingle her themes in the way that music does. To compensate for her inability to keep several voices going at once, she has her hidden dimension of memory and association: this is the "Invisible Knight" that is her constant companion'.

Miss Ridler doesn't, however, try to give force to these observations (or any others she makes) by any detailed analysis of particular poems or passages. Of Mr. Eliot she remarks that 'As a critic, he has kept his preferences while shedding his prejudices', and gives as illustration (among others—one concerns Milton) the difference between his early essay, *The Function of Criticism*, and 'the much less acid *What is a Classic?*'—A classic is what, of its kind, I should myself call *The Function of Criticism*; on the other hand, I couldn't disagree when I heard the 'less acid' performance described as being more like an exercise in tight-rope-walking than a feat of critical thinking. But Miss Ridler has a poise of her own that is in its own way impressive: I suspect it to be very much an Oxford way, and I think I suggest the interest and significance of her essay rightly when I recommend it for study as an Oxford product. I can't, however, see what part it has in a book planned (that is the claim) 'in such a way as to make the consecutive study of the poems possible'.

Mr. Mankowitz does a close analysis of that very fine early poem, *Gerontion*. But the contribution I read with marked pleasure and stimulus was Philip Wheelwright's on *Eliot's Philosophical Themes*, which, it will be noted, doesn't offer a point-by-point elucidation of any poem, and won't, I think, be among the aids most resorted to.

It will be gathered, then, that I shouldn't like to think of this book's being accepted (it very well may be) as a standard introduction and guide-book to Eliot. It contains some respectable things, but it seems to me calculated in sum to promote, not the impact of Eliot's genius—a disturbing force and therefore capable of ministering to life—but his establishment as a safe academic classic.

F. R. LEAVIS.

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THE INSTITUTION OF HENRY JAMES

THE QUESTION OF HENRY JAMES, edited by F. W. Dupee (*Allan Wingate*, 18/-).

This is a very welcome edition of an American book that appeared a year or two ago, an anthology of critical articles on Henry James collected from periodicals and of chapters culled from books. Perhaps it is not so well done as it might have been—its interest is less intrinsic than historical. We are given as a start an essay of 1879 ('Henry James, Jr.'), a fine specimen of complacent provincialism, and can see the various phases of James's reputation to date and the evolution of a serious critical approach to his art. In 1898, we are told, he was virtually unknown in America. In 1918 Mr. Eliot began his memorial notice ' . . . James will probably continue to be regarded as the extraordinarily clever but negligible curiosity'. Whereas in 1943 Mr. William Troy ends his essay ' . . . no great wonder that more and more people are turning to Henry James'. Between the nadir of '98 and the zenith of the last decade journalistic criticism exposes itself more shamefully than over any other great writer. In 1912 intellectual brilliance was represented by Sir Max Beerbohm's 'parody',[1] reprinted from *A Christmas Garland*—this is the period when the idiosyncrasies of James's late style stuck in the public throat and any journalist could get a laugh by making gestures of crude intention behind James's back. The viciousness of such a 'parody' lies in its endorsing the vulgar account of James as unreadable, unprofitable and preposterous. Mr. Dupee regrets that Wells's attack (in *Boon*, 1915) could not be reprinted too; contemporary with Beerbohm's piece, this illustrates the malice that the successful writers of the Wells-Bennett-Maugham era felt for the novelist who had devoted his life to his art, exercising incredible industry with no material reward (unless we reckon the O.M. bestowed on his death-bed). On top of this he had to face vulgar unprovoked attacks in his old age by journalists like Wells. He minded deeply. No one can read unmoved his letters to Wells about *Boon*. [Mr. Percy Lubbock comments with desolating fatuity, in his notes to *The Letters of Henry James*, 'H.J. was always inclined to be impatient of the art of parody']. The letters to Howells in 1888 and '95, to Howard Sturgis in '99, and to Gosse just before his death about the failure of the collected edition of

[1]This alone should suffice to explode the 'incomparable Max' myth —an ideal of elegant triviality, the cult of which is historically explicable as a result of Oscar Wilde's impact on Oxford and the higher journalism; though Oxford, King's College Cambridge, and their Bloomsbury affiliations appear to be still culturally in the Wilde phase, the rest of England isn't, and 'Max' should have been politely pigeon-holed long ago instead of being sponsored by the B.B.C. as the G.O.M. of English letters.

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works, show the impressive courage and dignity that James had developed to sustain him against the kind of treatment noted above.[2]

We see here how very different is the tone of pieces of the same period by Eliot and Conrad (and Pound, whose notices of 1918 were reprinted with later criticism in *Make It New*, and might very profitably have been drawn upon by Mr. Dupee). It is encouraging to see that those creative writers who were also literary critics, as distinct from journalists and academics and social men of letters, were all along able to respond to James at his own level of seriousness. Conrad, for instance, in 1905, is here seen to have jumped the whole historical process with his note on James as 'The Historian of Fine Consciences'. Similarly, Pound in *The Little Review*, 1918, could see that 'there was titanic volume, weight, in the masses he set in opposition within his work . . . His art was great art as opposed to over-elaborate or over-refined art by virtue of the major conflicts which he portrays'. At the same date Mr. Eliot was writing 'The real hero, in any of James's stories, is a social entity of which men and women are constituents . . . He is the most intelligent man of his generation'.

Conversely, the journalists are still where they were—all the phases of criticism of James that you find in this anthology are now simultaneously present in layers. The 1904 essay, 'In Darkest James', is just the kind of bright journalism you might find in the literary weeklies to-day; or Mr. Van Wyck Brooks, who is shown in 1925 damning James because his characters are not true to (the man-in-the-street's impression of) life and because Brooks cannot comprehend their motives—how often we still meet that. In 1927 Mr.

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[2] 'I *have* felt, for a long time past, that I have fallen upon evil days—every sign or symbol of one's being in the least *wanted*, anywhere or by anyone, having so utterly failed' (1895).

'I greatly applaud the tact with which you tell me that scarce a human being will understand a word, or an intention, or an artistic element or glimmer of any sort, of my book. I tell *myself* —and the "reviews" tell me—such truths in much cruder fashion. But it's an old, old story—and if I "minded" now as much as I once did, I should be well beneath the sod' (1899).

'I remain at my age (which you know [72]), and after my long career, utterly, insurmountably, unsaleable . . . The edition is from that point of view really a monument (like Ozymandias) which has never had the least intelligent critical justice done it—or any sort of critical attention at all paid it—and the artistic problem involved in my scheme was a deep and exquisite one' (1915).

His closest friend, Edith Wharton, noted 'his sensitiveness to criticism or comment of any sort' and explains that it 'had nothing to do with vanity; it was caused by the great artist's deep consciousness of his powers, combined with a bitter, a life-long disappointment at his lack of popular recognition'. *A Backward Glance*.

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Pelham Edgar, in what is unfortunately a standard work but really a monument of misunderstanding, shows that he has missed the whole point of James's studies of the International situation (p. 141, f.). We can feel that criticism has at any rate progressed if we compare the chapter from *The Method of Henry James* (1918) by Joseph Warren Beach, the pioneer critic of James's 'art', with the best work in the same field in recent years. Beach makes painstakingly one point after another about 'method', without ever seeming to get anywhere or to make the only kind of criticism that matters, that which adds to our ability to read the work: he does not understand the author's intention, he is not an interpreter. Nowadays, at the top level, critics of James, as Mr. Dupee says in his Introduction, 'discourage any reading that takes a part of his effect for the whole'.

Everyone will be glad to have Mr. Eliot's hitherto inaccessible pieces on James. Popularly, Mr. Eliot's contribution to James criticism has been limited to the famous sentence, now thirty years old, 'He had a mind so fine that no idea could violate it', which has been a battle-ground ever since. Some said it means nothing, others that it supported their representation of James as an aesthete, and others that it is demonstrably untrue, since James's mind was in fact the prey of his father's eccentric system of ideas, to illustrate which Junior composed his novels. Now we can read the sentence in its context, where it seems to have been thrown out as an exasperated attempt to distinguish James from the Merediths and Chestertons who cluttered the foreground of literature at the time. The essay dates, and contains many odd judgments (*e.g.*, 'Henry was not a literary critic'—who that has read even James's essay on Baudelaire in *French Poets and Novelists* would not demur?). It nevertheless puts its stresses in the right places; one I have already quoted, the other is contained in his title, 'The Hawthorne Aspect'.

The essay of 1917 on 'The Aesthetic Idealism of Henry James' introduces a familiar note: James's art is identified with Pater's. And wherever aestheticism is still prevalent, poor James is thus misconceived. The hangover from the 'Nineties represented by Mr. Cyril Connolly is still at the stage of seeing in James's prose no more than a Paterian surface:

> ' . . . the dialect of Pater, Proust and Henry James, the style that is common to mandarin academic circles given over to clique life and introspection. This dead literary English, with its long sentences, elaborate similes and clever epithets . . . ' (Introduction to *The Rock Pool*).

James's late style (for he developed several styles in the course of his very long career though the journalists seem not to have observed this elementary fact), ridiculous to a 'Max' and elegantly decadent to a Connolly, is now felt by serious readers to be, like his other idiosyncrasies, a language we have learnt to take for granted—once we are at home in it it presents no difficulty but is felt to be as effective an instrument, and one as informed with life, as the

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language of Hopkins or Shakespeare. The serious, the vicious aspect of this assimilation of James to Proust and Pater is that James is assumed to have, like them, replaced moral values by aesthetic ones, to be, as one critic in this book accuses him of being, 'ugly with the absence of moral energy and action'. That it refutes this falsification of James's work is the value of the criticism that puts James back into his place in the New England tradition. While there is a good deal collected by Mr. Dupee of purely American interest—contributed by those for whom the Question of Henry James was whether his art is American and therefore sound, or un-American and therefore decadent—even that has its point for the rest of us because it shows in sum, very convincingly, that, as the editor says, 'James turns out to be a continuator of the severe ethics of New England'. Unfortunately there is no extract from Mr. Yvor Winters' book on the influence of the New England ethos on American literature, *Maule's Curse* (1938), where the chapter devoted to James, called 'The Relation of Morals to Manners', still seems to me the best treatment of the subject. Another way of showing James's American roots is the essay here by Constance Rourke on 'The American', taken from her pioneer work *American Humour* (1931), where she made a study of the American folk-lore that fertilised American literature.

After aestheticism, the hard-boiled 'twenties, cock-sure and shallow, are seen 'placing' James. Then was produced the formula that explained away his art as a purely mental production of the jig-saw order of achievement. The distinction of *locus classicus* is perhaps to be claimed for Richards's *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1925)—the passage is not reprinted here but echoed in more than one place:

> 'Certainly it is a serious charge against much of Henry James, for example, that when the reader has once successfully read it there is nothing further which he can do. He can only repeat his reading. There is often a point at which the parts of the experience click together, the required attitude is achieved, and no further development is possible'.

This was evidently a bright idea being handed round by frequenters of the smart literary circles. Gide must have picked it up there:

> ' . . . nothing really alive nourishes him, and James extracts only from his brain what he knows to be there, and what his intelligence alone has put there . . . The skilfully made network spun out by his intelligence captivates only the intelligence . . . James, in himself, is not interesting; he is only intelligent . . . all his characters are like the figures of a clock, and the story is finished when they have struck the curfew . . . ' ('From an unsent letter to Charles Du Bos', American publication, 1930).

There is no sign in his 'letter', reprinted here, that M. Gide has read anything of James whatever (Connolly has the grace to admit in *The Condemned Playground* that he could never manage to get

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through James's books). Evidently this kind of judgment was a formula for dismissing a novelist for whom such people could have no use, whom they could not make the effort to comprehend, and to whom they felt impelled to display superiority. Mr. Matthiessen's mind seems also to have been formed in the Ricardian 'twenties: 'James's novels', he tells us here, in the essay on *The Ambassadors* from his recent book (reviewed in *Scrutiny*, Spring, 1947), 'are strictly novels of intelligence rather than full consciousness'. But even an academic nowadays breathes a livelier critical air than of old, and another way of proving that criticism achieves something is to compare the results of Matthiessen's industry with those of the Lubbocks and Pelham Edgars of the past.

This brings us to the day before yesterday. Yesterday saw the reversal of Mr. Matthiessen's dictum that in James's novels 'there is none of the welling up of the darkly subconscious life that has characterized the novel since Freud'. Mr. Edmund Wilson and Mr. Stephen Spender find James's works a Freudian field-day. Of course every great writer is reinterpreted in the light of contemporary interests (and fashions), but how sound the more recent presentations of James will look tomorrow is still to be decided. Thus when Mr. Spender finds that 'the monologues [of *The Golden Bowl*] dip into an abyss where they become part of the unconscious mind of Europe', and that 'His technical mastery has the perfection of frightful balance and frightful tension: beneath the stretched-out compositions there are abysses of despair and disbelief: *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land*' (1936)—one may well raise an eyebrow. Mr. Wilson, writing at the same date but keeping closer to the texts, has a surer poise. One may not agree with his interpretations, and in point of fact his account of *The Turn of the Screw* (as an hallucination of the neurotic governess who is narrator) has, I seem to remember, been shown not to hold water by several critics.[3] But when he proceeds to build up a theory of an ambiguity in presentation by James very generally, he is certainly drawing attention to a feature of James's work that most people, preferring to simplify, find it convenient to overlook, and which culminates in his valuable point that 'the element of irony in Henry James is often under-estimated by his readers'. Mr. Wilson's criticism is tough as opposed to the 'aesthetic' apprehensions of Mr. Matthiessen, but, being alive and disinterested, he succeeds in infusing a new sense of reality into James's works whereas the other's kind of attention seems to empty James's art of significance. Mr. Wilson puts substance behind his final claim that James 'is in no respect second-rate, and he can be judged only in the company of the greatest'.

As for the criticism of to-day, represented here by Mr. William Troy's 'The Altar of Henry James' (1943), it seems to have been fertilised by the new school of Shakespearean criticism that followed

[3]The latest is Mr. Robert Liddell in *A Treatise on the Novel* (Cape, 9/6).

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on *The Wheel of Fire*. To see in a great part of James's novels and stories a body of work of the same nature as Shakespeare's is at least less misleading than to judge them as Victorian prose fictions which aim at imitating a social surface. While the novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with few exceptions, were descended from Addison and Defoe, with some admixture of a debased stage comedy, there is quite another kind of novel, created by Emily Brontë, Melville, Conrad and Henry James, among others, which makes use of the technique of the dramatic poem. If Mr. Troy seems to be laying too much stress on James's symbols, he has to correct a long tradition of crass insensitiveness to the whole intention of James's art. 'It is clear enough' he writes, 'that to the present generation James means something more than to the generation of Van Wyck Brooks and Lewis Mumford or to the addled and intolerant generation of the 'thirties. Also clear is that what he means is something different'. 'As in any authentic artist', he continues, 'the "meaning" in James is contained in the total arrangement and order of his symbols, and in the novel everything—people, events, and settings—are capable of being invested with symbolic value'. Excellent as is his theory, he does not seem to me to carry it out in the right way; he makes no such convincing and illuminating analyses as Mr. Quentin Anderson in the essay on Henry James that appeared in *The Kenyon Review* for Autumn, 1946. The weakness of the study of symbols is that the text tends to get less attention, instead of a fresh concentration of attention. Nevertheless, elementary and uncertain as is Mr. Troy's handling of James's 'symbols', one can see how fruitful the approach might be. To recognize in James's novels and *nouvelles* art of the same nature as *Measure for Measure*, to see that they are in a tradition of mediæval and Elizabethan drama transmitted through Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and Bunyan (and so Hawthorne), is to make their meaning accessible, as it never can be if they are approached on the assumption that they are the same kind of thing as the writings of Trollope and Thackeray. This is to put James's work on a plane where the highest claims can be convincingly made for it.

The editor prints also Mr. Auden's poem *At the Grave of Henry James*, presumably as an illustration of the Snob cult of James. Mr. Zabel's contribution, 'The Poetics of Henry James' (1935), subscribes, in so far as it says anything, to the general conspiracy to find James's Prefaces profoundly illuminating, but fails to produce any paraphrasable explanation of why they should be held to be so. Mr. Jacques Barzun's essay, 'Henry James, Melodramatist' (1943), an attempt to show that romantic and violent drama is a basic element in James's writings, has some point inasmuch as it takes the wind out of the sails of those who would dismiss James as 'the last refinement of the genteel tradition' (as in an essay reprinted by Mr. Dupee on 'Henry James and the Nostalgia of Culture', 1930). But the superficiality of his thesis is apparent once he applies it to a specific work—*Washington Square*, which he interprets as crudely melodramatic:

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> 'And its force is derived from the essentially melodramatic situation of a motherless daughter victimized by a subservient aunt and a selfish father—a being for whom the melodramatic epithet of "fiend in human form" is no longer sayable but still just'.

This is to misrepresent James entirely and to do blatant injustice to the American *Eugénie Grandet*. James's triumph lies in doing without Balzac's sentimentality about the *jeune fille* and in creating an infinitely subtler situation than Mr. Barzun credits him with presenting. The father is not a villain—James takes pains to secure sympathy and respect for him, it is significant that he is linked with the 'Republican simplicity' of the ethos of old New York, and he is introduced to us as 'a thoroughly honest man'. The suffering is shown to be on both sides, a tragedy of the relations between an exceptionally brilliant father and a commonplace but worthy daughter. The two are bound by natural affection, but the clever father, his history being what it is, can take only an ironic tone with his dull and inarticulate child. In the one crisis of her life this acts as an insuperable barrier between them. There is complete mutual misunderstanding, symbolised by the icy waste among the mountains, with night descending on them, where they find themselves at odds so painfully, in a memorable scene. He alienates her confidence while doing his best for her welfare, and though the fortune-hunting lover 'had trifled with her affections', it was her father who 'had broken its spring'. It is the father's tragedy too, for he has destroyed his only natural link with life. To ignore the complexity of a distinguished work of art like *Washington Square* and to assert instead that it is something crude and commonplace is to impoverish James's creation. That is the result of concocting a theory about a writer's work and then making a text square with it.

It is the distinction of the essay of Mr. R. P. Blackmur's here, 'In the Country of the Blue' (1943), that it starts with the texts—James's tales about artists—and extracts a theory from them. Noting James's fondness for the theme of 'the artist in conflict with society' and making the point that 'the artist is only a special case of the man', Blackmur concludes: 'James made the theme of the artist a focus for the ultimate theme of human integrity'. It was James's own experience as an artist—the letters I quoted above are evidence—that qualified him to feel this struggle from the inside. Typically he dramatizes it in the choice between being a Henry St. George, the Master who has succumbed to the temptations of a Philistine society and ruined himself as a novelist, and being a Paul Overt—or a Nick Dormer (in *The Tragic Muse*) or a Ray Limbert (in *The Next Time*), or a Neil Paraday (in *The Death of the Lion*)—a kind of ascetic, saint and martyr. But why, while admitting Conrad's accomplishment as novelist, did James complain to Ford Madox Ford that Conrad's works left a very disagreeable impression on him? Was it that Conrad rubs in so intolerably the inescapable isolation of every man?

Q. D. LEAVIS.

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RECENT LITERARY CRITICISM IN GERMAN

DIE FREIEN RHYTHMEN IN DER DEUTSCHEN LYRIK, A. Closs (A. Francke A. G. Verlag, Bern).

Just as the German philosopher has perhaps been prone to expound his theories without much reference to the common experiences of human life (not only a German failing, since recent European philosophy has declared it a virtue, even an aim), so the German critic has often been apt to develop his aesthetic without due reference to actual poetic examples. In a new Swiss publication, *Die freien Rhythmen in der deutschen Lyrik*, however, the author, Dr. August Closs, keeps close down to his subject by incorporating extensive quotation into his work and, more important, by confining himself to a consideration of the words on the page and their arrangement within the poem, *i.e.*, rhythm. The book has a restrained discussion of the difference between metre and rhythm and between poetry and prose, an account of the beginnings of free verse, and separate chapters on a number of important German poets since Klopstock. The dangers inherent in the 'scholarly approach' are avoided: 'Metrisches Mass, Reimlänge und Zeilenanordnung haben keinen absoluten Wert'. Rhythm cannot be isolated in a line taken out of its context for it is something that happens between the first word and the last: we are concerned with the whole work ('das ganze Kunstwerk'). 'Der Rhythmus macht im Innersten das aus, was so oft als Gehalt *und* Form bezeichnet wird. Er ist das letzte, endgültige Kennzeichen, der Herzschlag eines Gedichtes'.[1]

Dr. Closs maintains critical standards: interesting though Klopstock is as the pioneer who supplied the model of the Ode, no attempt is made to conceal the fact that he cannot be ranked with Goethe and Hölderlin, who brought the more important ingredient—poetic genius. Historical importance of this kind can easily be established by educing a few dates, and Dr. Closs devotes his energies to such excellent pieces of practical criticism as those dealing with *Wanderers Sturmlied* and *Wie wenn am Feiertage* and in the relating of Hölderlin's 'dreistufige Aufbau' to his myth-trinity (*Erde, Äther, Licht*) and to his 'evolutionary' triad, 'Urzustand, Kindheit—Heroenzit, Kampf—Sittenideal, Einheit von Antike und Christentum und All-Liebe'.

The chapter on Hölderlin is exceptionally valuable. By placing it immediately after several pages of Goethean text (including *Wanderers Sturmlied, Ganymed, Prometheus*)—and not far from

[1] 'Rhythm constitutes, in its innermost form, that which so often is denoted as Form *and* Content. It is the final, authentic token, the heartbeat of a poem'.

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Klopstock's *Frühlingsfeier*—Hölderlin is seen in the tradition of the German free Ode and Hymn (a far more significant tradition than anything of a similar nature in English literature after Elizabethan-Jacobean blank verse).[2] He is not an isolated genius creating a private revolution in poetry; he is not quite a German William Blake; and, in spite of his personal tragedy and his painful sense of being out of touch with contemporary life, this very fact of being in touch with an already established tradition perhaps saved his later work from the singularities of the English poet's Prophetic Books. That he had something, in Germany, to begin from—Klopstock and Goethe for 'form', Schiller for 'philosophy'—enabled him to emerge a greater poet of Ode and Hymn than any of them. 'In Hölderlin erreichte die hymnische Dichtung nicht nur in Deutschland sondern auch in der modernen europäischen Dichtung überhaupt ihren Gipfelpunkt'. And leaving aside the question of this or that mode, he seems to me the greatest German poet since Goethe.

Dr. Closs emphasizes Hölderlin's avoidance of the merely personal mood ('selbst in den Diotimagesängen') and remarks on the peculiar clarity and precision of thought which distinguishes Hölderlin's work even in its most passionate movements: 'Hölderlins Lied ist . . . eine einzige Einheit von Dämonie und Klarheit, Rausch und Helle'. In this poetry we are aware, so to speak, of a very delicate set of instruments controlling a disquietingly powerful engine. With Stefan George, a poet to be differentiated from Hölderlin more forcibly than Dr. Closs does, I feel, we are aware of the strict control but not always of the inner power. In George's best poems (and most of them, I believe, come from the *Jahr der Seele*)[3] we are immediately conscious of what Dr. Closs describes as 'eine in Zucht geschnürte Energie', energy held in discipline: notably, 'Komm in den totgesagten park und schau', 'Der hügel wo wir wandeln liegt im schatten', 'Du schlank und rein wie eine flamme'. But in the later, typically Georgean poetry, and especially in the *Stern des Bundes*, we are overwhelmingly aware of the discipline operating in a vacuum—manifesting itself in a cold and at times even supercilious statement of belief, exhortation and

[2]Dr. Closs says, 'Nicht nur jeder Dichter, auch jedes Volk hat seinen eigenen Rhythmus. In der freien Bewegung zeigt sich die besondere Eigenart der deutschen Lyrik'. And it is true that a survey of German free verse necessitates a consideration of the chief poets from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. Free verse was a tradition in Germany before it even amounted to an eccentricity in England.

[3]*Das Jahr der Seele* is the central volume chronologically, just as *Der Siebente Ring* is the central volume in the quasi-philosophical system of Georgeanism as expounded by Gundolf. In his book *George* (Berlin, 1916), Gundolf describes the latter volume and its successor, the *Stern des Bundes*, as 'holy writings' ('heilige Schriften').

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condemnation which, though certainly not 'encumbered' by any very energetic metaphor, still fails to achieve either precision or persuasiveness. For instance, 'Ergeben steh ich vor des rätsels macht', 'Ein wissen gleich für alle heisst betrug', 'Ihr fahrt in hitzigem tummel ohne ziel'. It seems to me—though this question needs more arguing than I have space for here—as if George, seeking for a clear expression, perhaps a clear *conception*, of what he meant by 'the beautiful life' ('das schöne leben')—its social, religious and almost political connotations having already been broached in earlier volumes—found in the youth 'Maximin' the plainest statement of his ideals; literally a 'living symbol'. There, he seems to say as he points to 'Maximin', is the whole of my belief. But what 'Nature' may have achieved in this human being, George never quite managed to achieve in his art—and *we* have only the latter to go by.

However, Dr. Closs is not over-awed by the Georgean mysteries and points out the discrepancy in vitality between George's and Goethe's 'classicism'. He also makes the essential point with regard to Rilke: '*Sein Gesang ist Dasein* schlechthin, nicht Sehnsucht, nicht Traum oder Griechenideal, sondern mächtige Wirklichkeit'.[4] It cannot be said too often that Rilke is not a Platonist nor is he seeking to symbolise his personal feelings in the Panther, the Ball, the Blind Man. His achievement is truly to experience and express these other modes of being, and *not* (as is sometimes thought by those who assume Rilke to be following the commonest poetic practice, where an objective something 'stands for' something subjective) to pervert them into what must then seem over-ingenious expressions of his own private emotions. Rilke succeeds in finding so much in this world that many of his commentators—who presumably have not been so successful—have supposed that he must be 'yearning' for some other, ideal, world.

It remains to add that Dr. Closs, a bilingual writer—his English editions of Hölderlin and Gottfried have been reviewed in these pages—proves that the German language can, after all, be used simply and modestly as an exact instrument of literary analysis and aesthetic theory.

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Another recent publication, of more specialized interest, is Dr. J. M. M. Aler's *Studien in Stefan Georges Maximindichtung* (Menno Hertzberger, Amsterdam). The author's opinion of George is extremely high and his approach is the reverse of that suggested in these notes. But, while his interpretative method seems to me overweighted with scholarly annotation, the reader will find this book preferable to the usual Georgean literature—more honest than Gundolf's brilliant, specious commentary.

D. J. ENRIGHT.

[4] His song is simply *being*, not longing, not dream or the Greek Ideal, but potent reality'.

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EDUCATION

YOUNG ENTHUSIASTS, by Elizabeth Jenkins (*Gollancz,* 8/6).

Young Enthusiasts is described on the dust-jacket as a novel, but as a novel it simply doesn't exist. Miss Jenkins employs a technique of semi-fiction in order to present for consideration certain ideas about education; there is much to be said for the approach. Abstract discussion of education is frequently unprofitable because words like 'discipline', 'imagination' and 'respect' have elusive meanings, so that apparent agreement often covers significant divergences of belief and practice. The needed particularity *could* be given through the resources of the novelist. It is an approach however that calls for exceptional poise and honesty.

Young Enthusiasts has no such high seriousness: Miss Jenkins vacillates without conscience between fiction and reality. 'I have had experience of two progressive schools. The school described in this book is not a picture of either'. Nothing but biographical fact could justify some of Miss Jenkins' creations. Though she fails either to particularize or to generalize them one knows at sight those teachers to whom method is a religion, those dogmatic atheists, those 'vestigial instincts' (putting this phrase into circulation is the best service this book renders), and all the shabby smugness of the *New Statesman* milieu. The book has indeed been mistaken for a 'debunking' of progressive education, but that is an injustice. Miss Jenkins knows that, despite its attendant follies, progressive education has already achieved much. She describes the essential good manners of progressive schools without hiding the price that has to be paid for it in occasional downright rudeness. She testifies to the freedom from bullying and oppression which is one of the best features of progressive schools: bullying, distressing in itself, is evidence of deep-seated failure in any school or system. And the following is not pretentious because it is fully substantiated by experience:

> 'Children would sometimes come with white, waxen faces; these would show, first, an intermittent tinge of pink; then the pink would deepen and become constant. By that time they were probably banging about and answering back, and their friends would be in despair about their manners'.

Better food and living conditions are of course partly responsible for the improvement, but even more important is the release of energy that comes when young children begin to feel that they are loved and wanted for what they are and not for some outward conformity. It is a condition of all education (other than purely intellectual instruction) that, whilst hating the sin, one shall continue to love the sinner. The hating has been managed often enough, and the loving also; but I do not know where the distinction is more successfully maintained than in the better progressive schools.

In some respects the school described is atypical; there is, one

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can only hope, no school with such an appalling division of responsibility. The allocation of available money—and therefore in effect the choice of the staff, which is the most critical of all matters in any school—was made not by the headmistress but by the treasurer of the supporting society, who chose to cut down on salaries. Parents could drop in at any lesson, buttonhole the teachers at will, and perhaps intervene in lessons. It seems that the headmistress, officially unable to decide even such matters as the placing of a tap and deeming it injudicious to let her staff know her private opinions on small matters like examinations, confined her energies to the radiation of moral sunbeams from afar. In all this confusion of responsibility there seems to have been no delegation to the pupils themselves. Self-government is one of the most important issues arising in progressive schools, for a number of reasons; there is, for instance, more training in citizenship in the blunders and triumphs of a committee, however limited its responsibility, provided that responsibility rests squarely upon it, than in any course upon governmental methods and duties, and there is moreover a complete difference between the psychological effect of laws imposed by adults ('they') and that of laws made by pupils ('we').

Progressive schools however are so varied that generalizations are difficult. The P.N.E.U. and Dartington Hall have little in common except that neither is much like Winchester. There is Mr. A. S. Neill, who still believes that the good society can be built without reference to any concept of the good life. Mr. David Wills bases the whole of his remarkable work on his faith as a Quaker. Mr. W. B. Curry argues that the earlier religious certainty can be maintained in schools now only by presenting as undisputed truths beliefs which are in fact disputed, and that new values, independent of faith, must therefore be created out of the arts. The older education had at least the advantage of an agreed and adequate starting point, but has been powerless to resist the general collapse of standards.

Thus the most interesting sections of Miss Jenkins' book are those describing her own work as an English teacher, for English is a subject in which questions of value arise at every stage. It is in this connection that she makes the best use of her semi-fictional technique. One would like to hear more about the work bringing home the essential vulgarity of commercial writing, and work such as the admirable De Quincey-*Daily Worker* collocation, for it is from an accumulation (or rather development) of many such concrete perceptions clearly held that true confidence and independence of judgment are gradually built up. It must be added that her own writing is at times strangely slipshod; she mispunctuates habitually, makes grammatical errors like the use of 'whom' for 'who' and 'data' as a singular, and slips into the 'yeoman service' vein of writing when her attention begins to wander.

RAYMOND O'MALLEY.

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POET AS EXECUTANT

FOUR QUARTETS. T. S. Eliot. Read by the author (*H.M.V.* C. 3598-3603).

To say that these records must be disappointing even to a listener who approaches them with no high expectation is not to dismiss them or wish they had not been made. For consider the fact: here for posterity is a rendering of some of the indubitably great poetry of our time by the poet himself. And the rendering, as I shall suggest, has some significance for criticism. That, however, is not because of any direct illumination it throws on the poetry. It brings home to us, indeed, how good the verse is; but it does so by not teaching us anything about the rhythms—anything we didn't know already from the printed page. The printed page tells us how they go: the verse is so marvellously exact.

Mr. Eliot, if a great composer, is not a great, or good, or even a tolerable executant. His voice, as he uses it, is disconcertingly lacking in body. One wouldn't wish him to elocute in the manner of Mr. Robert Speaight (whose *actor's* declamation of Mr. Eliot's verse empties it), but a capacity for some strength of tone is clearly desirable. Mr. Eliot's reading is of course not unintelligent and insensitive in the actor's way, but it is not positively intelligent and sensitive in the way one would have expected of the poet himself. Judged by that standard it *is* unintelligent. His command of inflexion, intonation and tempo—his *intention*, as performer, under these heads—is astonishingly inadequate. He seems to be governed by a mechanical routine—to be unable to reduce his *clichés* (which suggest the reading of the Lessons) to a sensitive responsiveness.

As for the critical significance of this rendering, with its curious inadequacies, I think they can be related to the striking contrast offered by his later prose to his poetry. In his poetry he applies to himself a merciless standard; it is the product of an intense and single-minded discipline—discipline for sincerity and purity of interest. In his prose he seems to relax from the ascesis he undergoes as composer of verse. The prose-writer belongs to an external social world, where conventions are formidable and temptations are not only often not resisted, they seem not to be perceived. The reader of the poetry would seem to be more intimately related to the prose-writer than to the poet.

These records should call attention to the problem of reading *Four Quartets* out. The problem deserves a great deal of attention, and to tackle it would be very educational.

F.R.L.

NOTE.—W. H. Mellers' 'Music Chronicle' has had to be held over to the next issue.

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RECORDS

DELIUS: Song of the High Hills, (R.P.O. conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. H.M.V.).

BERLIOZ: Symphonie Fantastique (Hallé Orchestra conducted by John Barbirolli. H.M.V.).

BERLIOZ: Three Pieces from the Damnation of Faust, and Trojan March (The Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam, conducted by Eduard van Beinum. Decca).

SZYMANOWSKI: Notturno and Tarantella for violin and piano (Ida Haendel. Decca).

DEBUSSY: Ondine and Les Tierces Alternées, La Terrasse des Audiences du Clair de lune and General Lavine, from Preludes Book 2. (Robert Casadesus. Columbia).

The recording of *Song of the High Hills* is an important issue, both mechanically and aesthetically. Though not so consistently impressive as *Sea Drift*, the work is perhaps the most quintessential of Delius's compositions; it is interesting to compare its representative significance with that of Sibelius's *Tapiola*, which I discussed in a recent issue of *Scrutiny*. The climaxes seem at times rather synthetic—they have, at this date, a curiously and inappropriately Elgarian flavour; but there are passages, notably the first entry of the chorus and the conclusion, which I'm inclined to think are the most beautiful and sensitive passages in all Delius's work. Beecham's performance is justly celebrated; and the recording does justice to the richness of the music's texture and scoring.

The Berlioz pieces are not representative of the composer's finest work. The symphony is his first mature creation; and the extracts from Faust are slight movements which suffer, too, by being divorced from their context. Barbirolli's performance of the symphony is magnificently vital; but I do not think he fully understands the classical origins of Berlioz's work, and in particular his derivation from Gluck. The recording is good, but not up to the level of the Decca recording. The Faust pieces are superbly played and reproduced, and are admirably tractable on small gramophones.

Szymanowski is an interesting composer whose work could well be better known to the gramophone public. It is thus a pity that Decca should have chosen to re-record a work which already exists in a satisfactory version by Menuhin, and which is in any case hardly worthy of the composer's talents. There are some imaginative noises in the Notturno; but the Tarantella sounds like an uglified version of Wieniawski. It is most expertly performed by Ida Haendel.

The Casadesus recordings are the most sympathetic Debussy playing I have heard in a long time; and they have the advantage that the pieces are seldom included in recital programmes.

W.H.M.

Several important recordings of eighteenth-century music are held over, and will be discussed in a Music Chronicle devoted mainly to music of this period, in the next issue.

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